

1985

## Our Story of Gulfport, Florida: compiled during 1982-1985

Gulfport Historical Society

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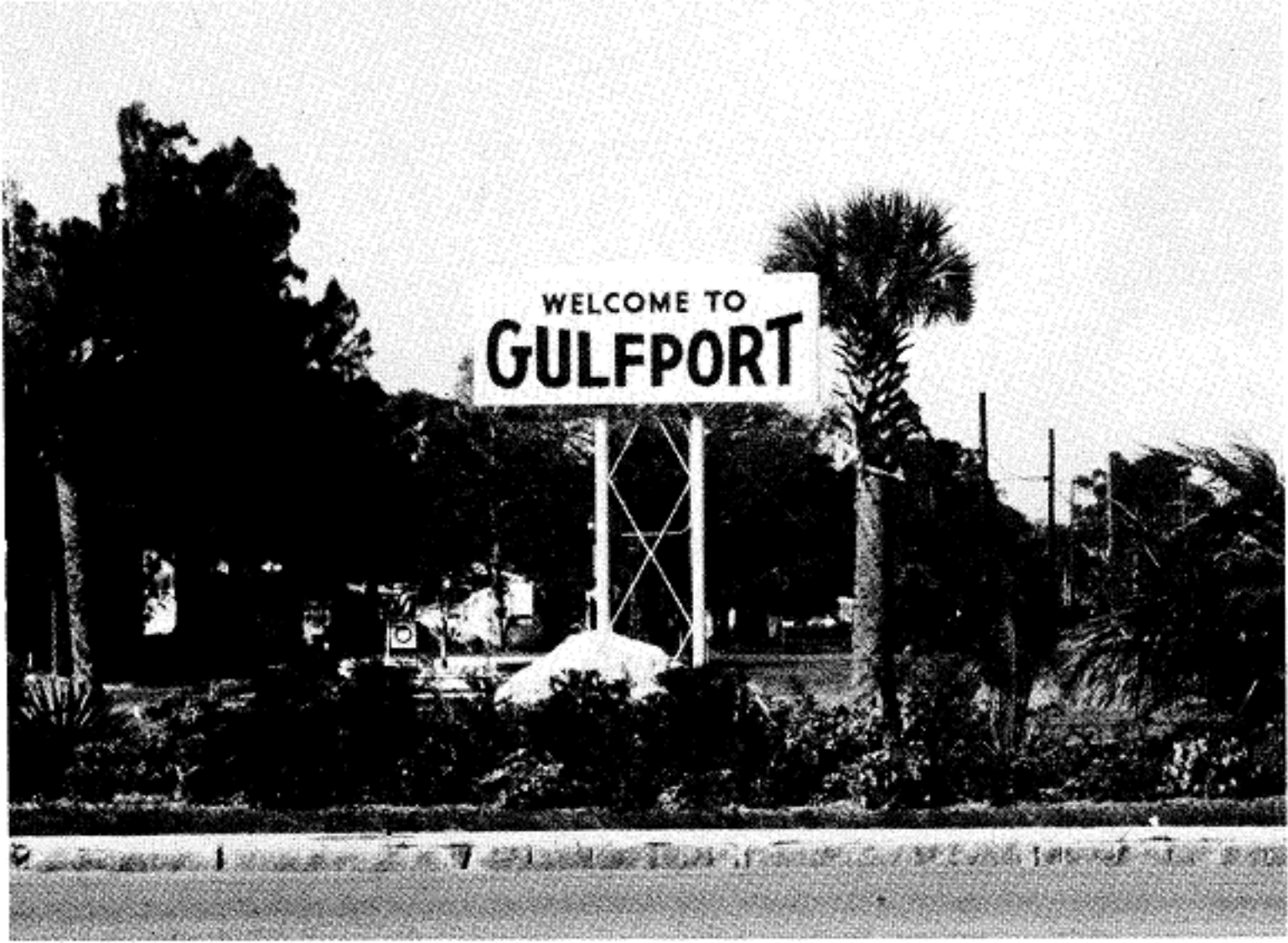
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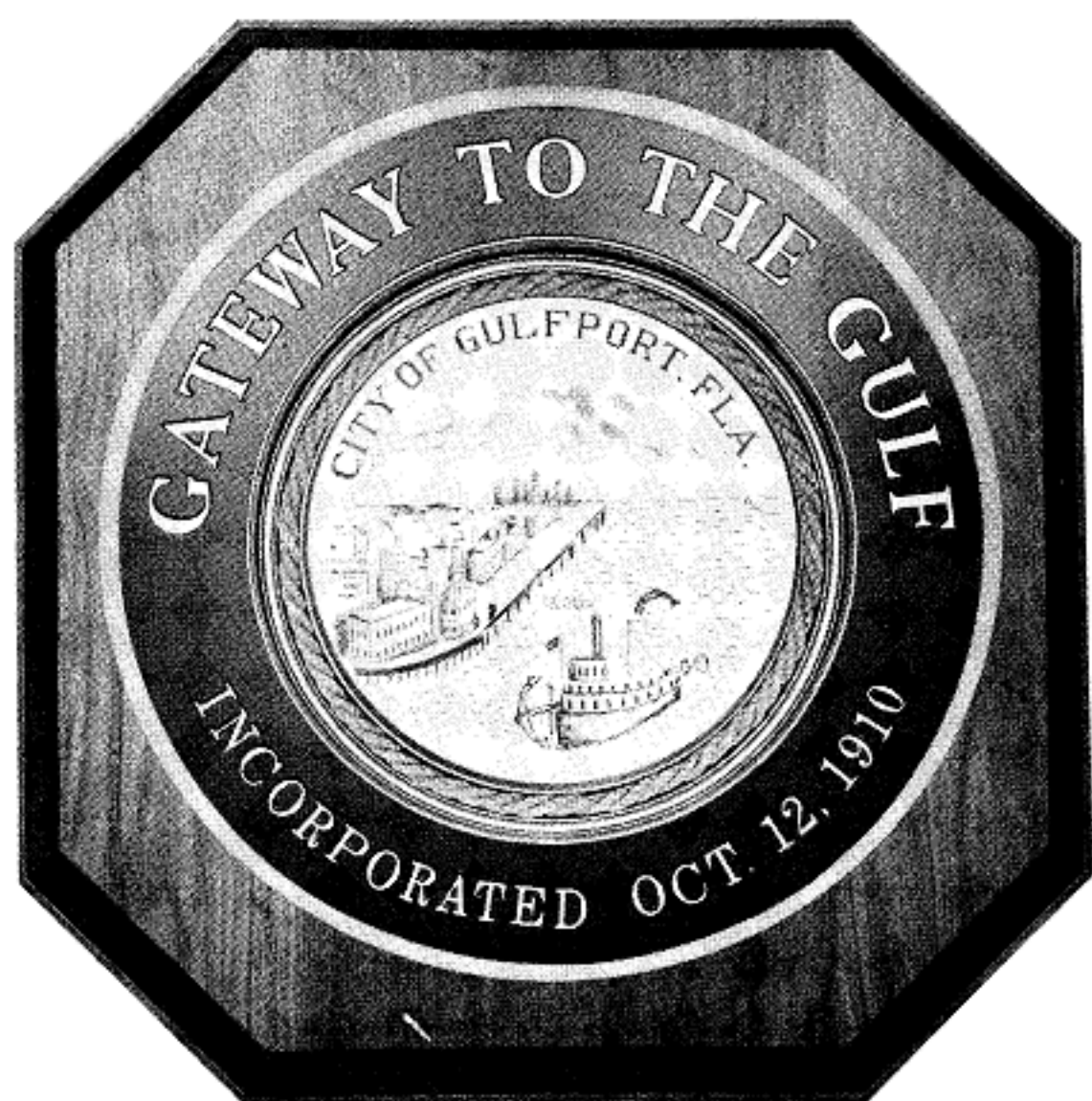
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# *Our Story of Gulfport, Florida*



**Compiled During  
1982-1985  
by the  
Gulfport Historical Society  
to Honor  
Gulfport's 75th Anniversary**

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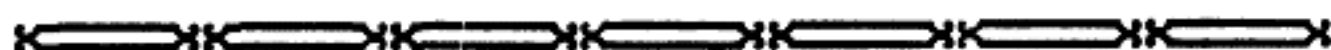
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- B. To research, write, and publish articles, pamphlets, and books concerning the history of Gulfport, Florida, and the surrounding area.
- C. To operate a museum of material concerning the history of Gulfport, Florida, and the surrounding area.



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## PRELUDE

Many have shared memories with us who have taped, typed, written, rewritten, sorted, selected, collated, arranged, *and* prayed! Without the untiring efforts of Helen Ross, Searcher for Facts, we could never have had access to much of what you will read either here or in our Museum. Without the vision and persistence of our President and Founder, Catherine Hickman, it is highly improbable that either the Society or the Museum, and their contributions both to the Gulfport of today and tomorrow, would have become part of our City's attributes. A special thanks goes to Genevieve Smith for the Society's logo, line drawings and art renderings used in this book. On our behalf and that of our readers, we thank ALL who helped us publish our story. This volume is supplemented by donated memorabilia, by taped interviews and family histories in our Museum. Countless records, old newspapers, over one hundred interviews have been studied, and about fifty writers have helped us. We invited many authors, hoping to offer several styles of writing to increase your excitement in reading. This fact explains why you will find repetitions and contradictions because memory of those who gave us information is individualized, isn't it? Here we describe our City from its simple beginnings to its present age of 75. We dedicate our production for the Gulfport Historical Society to all who love our City and who hope only the best to happen for it and its people. To paraphrase a Chinese proverb — had we waited for perfection, this book would never have been published.

*Mary Atkinson*

*Agnes Conron*

*Willard B. Simonds*

*Genevieve Smith*

*Frances Purdy, Chairman*

Editorial Committee

Gulfport Historical Society

Summer, 1985



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
INTRODUCTION . . . . .	11
<b>PART I — THE BEGINNING</b>	
1 Our Overture . . . . . <i>Genevieve Smith</i>	14
2 Early History of Gulfport . . . . . <i>Florence Slaughter Jarrett</i>	18
3 Some Wonderful Memories About Early Settlers . . . . . <i>Florence Roberts Fussell</i>	23
4 Barnett's Bluff — A Beginning . . . . . <i>Genevieve Smith</i>	28
5 The Waterfront of Gulfport. . . . . <i>Carl A. Norberg, Ph.B.</i>	35
<b>PART II — HOW OUR VILLAGE GREW</b>	
6 CHURCHES	
Calvary Baptist Church. . . . . <i>Alice Libby</i>	54
Church of Christ . . . . . <i>Robert Fincher</i>	55
Congregation Beth Sholom . . . . . <i>Rabbi Morris H. Kobrinetz</i>	56
First United Methodist Church of Gulfport . . . . . <i>Ruby Walker</i>	57
Gulfport Church of the Nazarene . . . . . <i>Doris Howell</i>	59
Gulfport Open Bible Church . . . . . <i>Rev. Clarence Dillinger</i>	60
Gulfport Presbyterian Church . . . . . <i>Edith Haas</i>	61
Kingdom Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses . . . . . <i>David Kester</i>	63
Most Holy Name of Jesus Parish. . . . . <i>Father Frank Goodman</i>	64
7 SCHOOLS and Stetson College of Law . . . . . <i>Genevieve Smith</i>	66
8 GOVERNMENT SERVICES & BUSINESS. . . . .	71
As Business Grew . . . . . <i>Agnes Conron, Frances Purdy</i>	71
City Council and Management . . . . . <i>Agnes Conron, Catherine Hickman, Frances Purdy</i>	79
City Services. . . . . <i>Willard B. Simonds</i>	86
Gulfport Volunteer Fire Department. . . . . <i>Walter M. Brooks, Nathan White</i>	92
Police Department — Past & Present . . . . . <i>Agnes Conron, Frances Purdy</i>	121
Postal Service . . . . . <i>Sydney Brooks, Willard B. Simonds, Others</i>	125
Printed Words. . . . . <i>Willard B. Simonds, Frances Purdy</i>	128
Streets and Near Bankruptcy . . . . . <i>Willard B. Simonds</i>	132
Transportation . . . . . <i>Willard B. Simonds</i>	144
9 SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS. . . . .	173
Andy Anderson Post 125 . . . . . <i>Pat Davis Johnson, "Scotty" Small</i>	173
Boca Ciega Yacht Club . . . . . <i>Carl A. Norberg</i>	175
Friends of the Gulfport Public Library, Inc. . . . . <i>Allean Davis, "Connie" Burde, Frances Purdy</i>	178
Gulfport Citizens' Association . . . . . <i>Dr. Morris Rabinowitz</i>	179
Gulfport Civic Club, Inc. . . . . <i>Frederick S. Allen, Norman Schalm, Frances Purdy</i>	180
Gulfport Community Club . . . . . <i>Claire Deel, James E. Anstead</i>	181
Gulfport Coterie Club . . . . . <i>Maxine Fantz</i>	183
Gulfport Garden and Bird Club . . . . . <i>Stella Tamm, Agnes Conron</i>	183

## Chapter 9 — SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS / continued

Chapter		Page
	Gulfport Lions Auxiliary . . . . .	185
	<i>Doris Brown</i>	
	Gulfport Lions Club. . . . .	187
	<i>Willard B. Simonds</i>	
	Knights of Columbus . . . . .	190
	<i>Arthur W. Davis</i>	
	Newcomers' Club of Gulfport . . . . .	190
	<i>Leavitt L. Wood, Wilda Lakin</i>	
	Senior Citizens' Club . . . . .	191
	<i>Hazel Squires, Mary Konz, Others</i>	
	Woman's Club of Gulfport . . . . .	192
	<i>Frances Purdy</i>	
<b>PART III — DAILY LIVING, THEN AND NOW</b>		
10	What About Housing? . . . . .	204
	<i>Frances Purdy, Victoria T. Jacobson, Olga Milin</i>	
	<i>Prof. Paul Paganuzzi, Frederick S. Allen,</i>	
	<i>Herman Geller, Willard B. Simonds</i>	
11	Living on the Edge of the Sand Flats. . . . .	218
	<i>Norma L. Huckins</i>	
12	Mullet Fishing. . . . .	220
	<i>Richard E. Bozeman</i>	
13	Sickness for Them or Us . . . . .	223
	<i>Frances Purdy</i>	
14	Some Comments About Cemeteries . . . . .	228
	<i>Frances Purdy</i>	
15	Some Fun and Other Things . . . . .	231
	<i>Mary P. Atkinson, Nathan White, Agnes Conron</i>	
<b>PART IV — SOME INTERESTING BUILDINGS</b>		
16	Bayview Terrace Restaurant . . . . .	248
	<i>Edith Haas</i>	
17	Boca Ciega Inn . . . . .	249
	<i>Allean Davis</i>	
18	Gulfport City Halls . . . . .	252
	<i>Frances Purdy</i>	
19	Gulfport Multipurpose Senior Center . . . . .	254
	<i>Ted Potyka</i>	
20	Prigun Apartments. . . . .	257
	<i>Eloise Robeson</i>	
21	Scout Hall . . . . .	257
	<i>Judith C. Ryerson</i>	
22	Stetson — From Rolyat to Law School . . . . .	258
	<i>Genevieve L. Smith</i>	
23	The Casino — Heart and Hub of Gulfport. . . . .	262
	<i>Doris Brown</i>	
24	The Cedars (Suncoast Inn) . . . . .	264
	<i>Eloise Robeson</i>	
25	The Community Center . . . . .	266
	<i>Mary Drake, Others</i>	
26	The Gulfport Clinic — McLellan House . . . . .	267
	<i>Kali Gillespie</i>	
27	The Gulfport Historical Museum . . . . .	268
	<i>Frances Purdy</i>	
28	The Gulfport Public Library . . . . .	270
	<i>Ruby Walker</i>	
29	The Whitbeck Diary. . . . .	272
	<i>Frances Purdy</i>	
<b>PART V — WHAT MAKES GULFPORT UNIQUE?</b>		
30	A Wash Day '84 . . . . .	282
	<i>Allean Davis</i>	
31	Cohesiveness of Three Families for Five Generations . . . . .	283
	<i>Poul Hornsleth, Jr.</i>	
32	Daniel's Clover Specialty Company. . . . .	285
	<i>Frances Purdy</i>	
33	Gulfport Beach Musicians . . . . .	287
	<i>Frances Purdy</i>	
34	Gulfport's Golf Story. . . . .	288
	<i>John M. Davidson, Willard B. Simmonds</i>	



## PART V — WHAT MAKES GULFPORT UNIQUE? / continued

<i>Chapter</i>	<i>Page</i>
35 History of Boy Scouting and of Girl Scouting . . . . .	293
<i>Emily W. Rautman</i>	
36 History of Gulfport Softball Team . . . . .	304
<i>Jack Welker</i>	
37 Kindergarten and Nursery of Joe Shaffer - Eulogy . . . . .	306
<i>Ruth E. Jefferson, Pam Lanning, Others</i>	
38 Little League of Gulfport . . . . .	311
<i>Mary P. Atkinson, Norman Haines</i>	
39 Our Beach Photographer. . . . .	313
<i>Frances Purdy</i>	
40 Our Parks. . . . .	314
<i>Frances Purdy</i>	
41 Senior Services . . . . .	317
<i>Ruth Jacobs, Jim Whaley, Others</i>	
42 The Doll Lady of Gulfport . . . . .	319
<i>Allean Davis</i>	
43 The Gulfport Community Players. . . . .	320
<i>Ruth Barbey</i>	
44 The Gulfport Historical Society . . . . .	321
<i>Ruby Walker</i>	
45 The Gulfport Shuffleboard Club. . . . .	323
<i>Aubrey Perfater</i>	
46 The Konglomerati Foundation. . . . .	324
<i>Richard Mathews</i>	
47 Yes, Annie Laurie Does Live in Gulfport!. . . . .	326
<i>Frances Purdy</i>	
CHRONOLOGICAL CALENDAR . . . . .	331
<i>Genevieve Smith</i>	
POSTLUDE . . . . .	339
TAPED INTERVIEWS AVAILABLE IN MUSEUM . . . . .	341

## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

	<i>Page</i>
PART I . . . . .	47-52
PART II . . . . .	84-85, 194-202
PART III . . . . .	242-246
PART IV . . . . .	252-253, 273-280
PART V . . . . .	328-329
GULFPORT HISTORICAL SOCIETY. . . . .	340



## INTRODUCTION

As a newcomer to Gulfport fifteen years ago, I wondered about the history of this City where I'd chosen to live and, in time, discovered many others shared this curiosity. In contacts in several community organizations, I talked with people who remembered and were willing to tell about how it all used to be. So was born the notion that it might be challenging to write some of it; but soon the enormity of the task sedated the ambition!

Then, in 1981, the Historical Society became reality largely because Catherine Hickman recognized the need for it and persevered until she got it organized. In 1983, the Society obtained our Museum on lease from the City.

When fourteen of us met that June 8, 1981, we talked about what we thought our Historical Society should do — and an objective enthusiastically agreed upon was “to compile a history of Gulfport.” Other aims were “to share memories” and “to instill knowledge about and pride in our City.”

Our first Nostalgia Day the next April in Chase Park was an instant success — with about two hundred bringing picnics and memories, both to be shared. Nathan L. White, Sr. was the dynamic EmCee, recognizing nearly each one by name and stimulating interaction all over the place. Some came dressed in old fashioned costumes, everyone wore smiles, and apparently all wanted that event to become an annual affair — which it has. The City has helped us each year by providing tables and chairs and yard care before and after the big time. They have given us a huge cake decorated with our logo and Council has been well represented each year. In 1983, we could show off our Museum with pride that it was finally coming to resemble our notions of what it should be physically, because of donations of time, materials, and efforts of many volunteers! In 1984, we presented a Civil War Enactment with drills, marching, and exhibits of implements and arms of those days. Antique cars were again admired!

On May 4, 1985, we had exhibits of fishing gear and procedures, and by this time we could really offer quite an extensive examination of scrapbooks, furniture, clothing, utensils, and other goodies in our Museum. This time more wore costumes and again, the flea market made us another

welcome hundred dollars or so — thanks to donations and talents of some very faithful members!

These happy occasions provided opportunities to talk with those who had memories for our history and frequently old-time residents suggested others who could add to what they recalled. Our “Searcher for Facts” Helen Ross never hesitated to follow up leads that took her many miles and into many homes, gathering the taped interviews so helpful to us and so interesting to you who will one day listen to them in the Museum or read the typed copies done by volunteers for our Society. Our “Nostalgia Days” have become occasions happily anticipated by those who know it’s a time when they can have reunions with old neighbors who now may be separated by many miles. They hunt through the memorabilia we have assembled, bring more, and seem grateful that we have been proceeding with the compilation of this volume.

By 1983, Willard B. Simonds had produced a reprint of the complete set of *The Sea Breeze* which was the peninsula’s first newspaper, published by McPherson and Bennett, and copies were sold. It’s a treat to read what was happening then and to see how people and places looked during the year starting April 1, 1886.

The above events spurred us on with collection of facts and fancies — mostly memories — so that now we offer text, some scholarly, some whimsy. Combined with that, we have pictures YOU have given us and we have selected for use, together with original drawings and art renderings by our artist Genevieve Smith, who also designed our Society logo.

This writer feels deeply grateful to have been considered worthy of the task assigned, for the diversified contacts she has enjoyed during its accomplishments, and for the patience her primary colleagues have exhibited during her anxious moments — which have been many!

— Frances Purdy, Editor



# **The Beginning**



## CHAPTER 1

### OUR OVERTURE

Tall pines, sprawling palmettos, and lush growth flourish along the three and a half miles of Gulfport's waterfront. The boundaries of this city on Boca Ciega Bay have shifted through the years like the tide along its sandy beaches. Bountiful waters with fish, clams, oysters, scallops, crabs and lobsters, and the land with its wild creatures, fed and clothed the inhabitants on this point of Pinellas through the years.

Archaeological surveys indicate that prehistoric settlements existed about 5,000 to 10,000 years ago in the area around Boca Ciega Bay.

In the early part of the sixteenth century, Spanish explorers Ponce de Leon and Ponfilo de Narvaez discovered a tribe of Timucuan Indians, known as mound builders, who numbered about 6,800. Narvaez landed on the lower end of Pinellas, near Gulfport, in an area known today as the "jungle." The Timucuan encounters with the Spanish were seldom friendly, and in time they were weakened by battles, diseases, or the selling of Timucuans into slavery; their numbers slowly diminished.

In following years, pirates frequented Tampa Bay and the peninsula. In 1823, when Dr. Phillippi became the county's first white settler, his life was threatened and he was saved only because he medically attended some of the pirates. It is stated that there was "safe harbor" for people who located in the northern section of the county near to Dr. Phillippi. He was also said to be the man who first introduced grapefruit into this peninsula.

Meanwhile, growth was creeping into the county with the establishment of Ft. Harrison, where Clearwater now stands. The 1842 Armed Occupation Act (Homestead Act), however, gave the first great impetus to settlement of the peninsula. Antonio Maximo Hernandez secured a land grant from the United States government and was the first known settler in the lower end of the peninsula. His fishery and other holdings were wiped out in the hurricane of 1848.

In 1855, Hillsborough County opened a road from Clearwater Harbor Settlement to the head of Tampa Bay. Tampa cattlemen, who grazed cattle on open range near the future sites of Gulfport and St. Petersburg, added the "Old Tampa

Road" extension which further opened the southern part of the peninsula.

In 1856, a pine timber home was built in the lower section of land, at about Lakeview and 20th Street, by James R. Hay. Mr. Hay's truck garden supplied fresh produce for Tampa markets. The year 1857 saw Abel Miranda settling at Big Bayou on Tampa Bay. John C. Bethell started a fishery at Little Bayou in 1859. By 1860, there were approximately 50 families on the peninsula. Following the Civil War, a few more settlers came into Pinellas County where they could buy land for about 50 cents an acre.

According to Cecil Slauter, a descendant of Captain James Barnett, Barnett and his wife Rebecca landed on a sandy knoll at the foot of present York Street and 52nd Street in Gulfport, and became the first settlers, in 1867. Rebecca, with her three children, had lost her first husband, Sam Slauter, as a result of the Civil War, and later married Capt. Barnett. They eventually had three more children and built their first home on York Street. In 1876, the Barnetts sold their York Street property to Mr. Joseph Torres and relocated on 49th Street near 26th Avenue S. It is believed that some trees from their original orange grove still exist.

The town began to grow. Fishing was a way of life for everyone. Fruits and vegetables were plentiful. In 1886, the first newspaper, *Sea Breeze*, was established by William J. McPherson, and along with G. W. Bennett, produced newsy articles of the day (copies of which can be viewed at the Gulfport Historical Museum).

William B. (Bonafacio) Miranda had arrived in the lower peninsula about the same time as Torres in 1876. Miranda had captained a small steamship, was a surveyor, businessman, and also had legal training. He settled and built a home on Lakeview Avenue.

Hamilton Disston, a Philadelphian, rich with a saw, tool, and file fortune left by his father, became interested in promoting the Gulfport area. Disston had purchased 4,000,000 acres, about 6,200 square miles of Florida real estate, for \$1,000,000. He was known as a developer of Tarpon Springs and, in 1883, he met Joseph B. Torres and William B. Miranda who suggested the possibilities of developing a new city on Boca Ciega Bay.

Disston, who owned property surrounding most of the little settlement, was extremely interested, and in August 21, 1884, the Disston City Land Company was formed.

The filed plat of Disston City included more than 12,000 acres, including most of the land on the lower peninsula. This ambitious plan on paper included streets that were a hundred feet wide and a waterfront avenue. The plan included space to house 50,000 people. It was to be advertised widely in this country and in England. In actuality, however, Disston built a 26-room, L-shaped Waldorf Hotel overlooking the Bay which opened Christmas Eve, 1884, under the management of Englishman William A. Wood. Disston also financed a wharf into Boca Ciega Bay, a warehouse, three store buildings, and several homes, according to Grismer in *The Story of St. Petersburg*. Hamilton Disston realized that for his city to prosper, a means of transportation other than by water must be established, so he took steps to bring the Orange Belt Railroad into his city.

Disston had his brother Jacob set up office in the hotel in anticipation of the railroad extension. But when a generous land offer was made available in St. Petersburg, the railroad opted to have its destination on that waterfront. This doomed the expected boom in Disston City.

However, promotion and development of Disston had brought more settlers into the lower peninsula. A sawmill was built by Canadian George L. King near New Cadiz (located on Boca Ciega Bay between Clam Bayou and Maximo Point), which provided most of the lumber used in Disston City construction. The steamship *Mary Disston* began making regular stops. In the growing village, Mr. Torres opened a general store, Mr. H. E. Baumeister specialized in drygoods and hardware, and R. L. Locke had groceries and a meat market. In 1886, the first one-room school was opened, with Arthur Norwood, an Englishman, as teacher.

A young, ambitious entrepreneur — Captain J. F. Chase — meanwhile saw in this community a chance to realize his dream that Disston City would be a place where veterans of the Civil War could spend their last days. The residents agreed and readily adopted the name "Veteran City." (Disston City was called "Bonafacio" until 1890 because the Post Office would not recognize the name inasmuch as "Disston City" just north of Tampa already existed. When that Post Office dissolved, Disston City was accepted as an official name.) On April 5, 1905, the Reverend J. P. Hoyt delivered the dedicatory prayer, and the Honorable E. R. Gunby of Tampa gave the principal address. Descriptive folders praising Veteran City reached all parts of the country. A few people re-



sponded and bought land, but Veteran City did not prosper. Today our historical museum stands in Chase Park — a reminder of those early visionary days of Captain Chase.

Jacob Disston, continuing the Disston's financial backing, assisted Frank Allton Davis' plans in moving the Tarpon Springs electrical generating plant to St. Petersburg and purchasing rails for a trolley line from St. Petersburg to Disston City. With the Orange Belt Railroad ending in St. Petersburg, the trolley extending to Gulfport, and the extension of a pier into Boca Ciega Bay to accommodate larger boats, the City of Gulfport prospered.

A Casino for gatherings was built. Churches and schools were constructed. Parks were provided. A network of streets was extended. Bountiful waters still served as the main means for making a living, aided by improved transportation of fish and sea delicacies to market.

Gulfport was incorporated October 12, 1910, in the Gulf Casino. *The St. Petersburg Times* indicated that Gulfport might be the largest town in Florida, territorially speaking, at that time. There were 38 registered voters by this time, with 30 voters participating and only 7 dissenting. The limits of the City included choice farmland lying about two miles from the corporation line of St. Petersburg and extending from the east shore of Clam Bayou to the sandy shores of Boca Ciega Bay. "Gulfport is an appropriate name since it is the point of embarkation for Gulf of Mexico points on the west side of the peninsula," stated the October 11, 1910 issue of the *Independent*. The little town was beginning to grow.

Additional homes were soon constructed and a four-room school added. Town officers voted to purchase twelve lots for town purposes and to issue bonds to cover \$4,000 construction costs.

The October 13, 1910 issue of the *St. Petersburg Evening Independent* stated in bold headlines, "Veteran City Is No More. At the meeting held last night at the Gulf Casino, the little Boca Ciega town was organized as Gulfport, with E. E. Wintersgill as mayor, and the following councilmen: A. C. Stephanski, H. C. Sawyer, Joshua White, Henry Withers, and L. M. Wintersgill. S. J. Webb will be the city clerk and J. C. White the marshal."

On November 14, 1911, Pinellas peninsula split from Hillsborough County and became Florida's 48th county with 13,193 residents. Pinellas was noted as the second smallest



county with 264 square miles. As early as 1897, a struggle began for this separation which was wanted by the people of Pinellas peninsula. Hillsborough County, centered around Tampa, had ignored Pinellas and its growth problems with needs for new school buildings, roads, and general improvements. Taxes were levied and collected, but inadequate improvements were provided.

Today the City of Gulfport sprawls over the southwest corner of Pinellas peninsula, from the shores of Boca Ciega Bay on the south, Royal Palm on the west, 7th Avenue S. on the north, and 49th Street to 26th Avenue S. and Clam Bayou on the east. It has an approximate population of 12,500.

Gulfport's government is Mayor/Council/City Manager. It has its Police and Fire Departments headquartered near the original sites of City government structures on 53th Street S. It also has a library, community center, senior citizens' center, numerous parks and recreational facilities.

The following chapters in this history of Gulfport will explore separate facets of the growth of this "Gateway to the Gulf."

— *Genevieve Smith*

## CHAPTER 2

### EARLY HISTORY OF GULFPORT

*By Florence Slaughter Jerrett (daughter of Henry)*

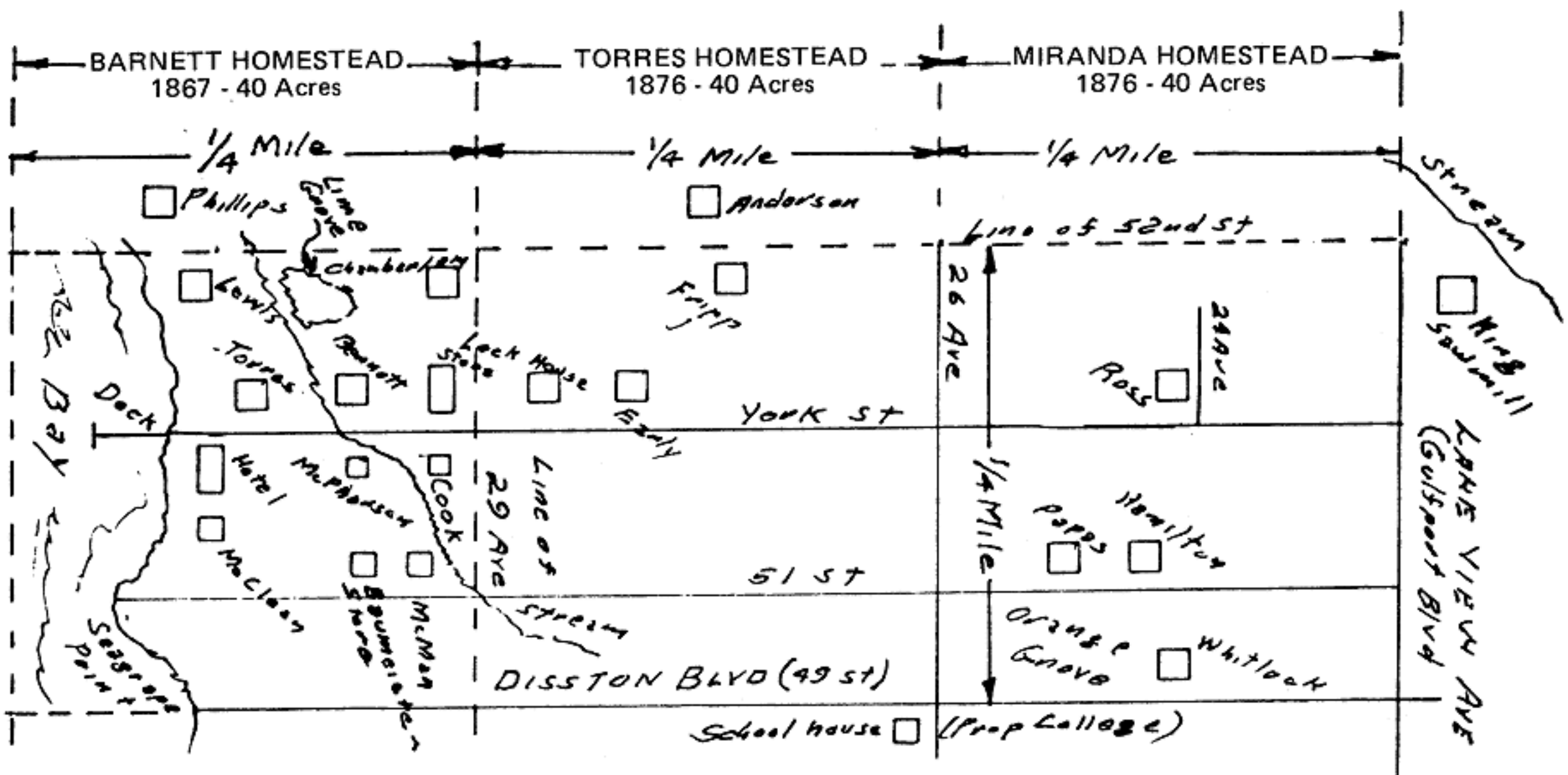
Born at Disston City, 1892

(history submitted 1963)

After the War Between the States in 1865, Mrs. Samuel (Rebecca) Slaughter, a war widow with three small children — Martha, Henry, and Melissa — then living in Madison, Florida, hired a man with a covered wagon to bring her and her children to this area. She first stopped at Tampa where she met and married James Barnett, a war veteran. A short time later they came by boat to where Gulfport now is. They homesteaded acreage west of what later became Disston Avenue and south of Lakeview down to the Bay. At that time wild animals were roaming the woods — bear, wild cats, panthers, deer, and plenty of wild turkeys. They built a house of logs on the very spot where Mrs. Whitbeck's home now stands [49th and 26th Streets]. They planted a small

## DISSTON CITY — Late 1880's

From Original Sketch by FLORENCE SLAUGHTER JARRETT  
(Drawn from memory in 1963)



**NOTES:** Drawn by W. M. Simonds, April 1985, to show area and homestead boundaries to scale. Disston and Lake View were wagon-width trails winding through the forest. Other streets shown were merely footpaths. Mrs. Jarrett omitted a few homes. One such home was Miranda's home and real estate office on Lake View. Building sizes are not to scale, and locations are approximate. Locations of York and 51st Streets are not to scale. Mrs. Jarrett's original sketch is on display at the Gulfport Historical Society Museum.

orange grove and did some farming. Henry was about eight years of age at this time and his job was making salt, which he did by boiling salt water until the water evaporated and left the salt. Tampa was the nearest place to buy supplies, and a sailboat the only way to travel. They did not suffer for food as there was plenty of fish, crabs, clams, oysters, and wild meat.

After a time people began drifting in from all parts of the country. Mr. Torres, a Spaniard and a lawyer, came with his family from New Orleans. He built and ran a general store. While here, his wife died and he married Georgia Nash, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. William Nash. They later moved to Tampa and he became a County Judge. Other families were McMann, Lock, Baumeaster, Early, Hamilton, Frippe, Cook, McPherson, Chamblien, and Anderson who later became the first Fire Chief of St. Petersburg when horses were used. Arthur Norwood, an Englishman, lived in the vicinity of Tangerine and 46th Street. He later opened the first dry goods store in St. Petersburg. The name given this village [at that time] was Bonafacio.

A former slave settled in the vicinity of Tangerine and 34th Street. His name was John Donaldson. He was one of the best men in the world and we children called him "Black John." Ed Donaldson, who now has the snack bar on the south mole, is one of his sons.

Hamilton Disston, a saw manufacturer from Philadelphia, bought a great deal of acreage in this section and built a hotel on the Bayfront at about 52nd Street. By this time a dock had been built and a small steamer was landing there with passengers and freight. The steamer was short-lived, however. While docked at the Disston City Pier, it caught on fire and burned. After that it was back to the sailboats for transportation!

In the 1880's, the government surveyors came here to make plats, and Henry Slaughter helped in this work. During the boom of the 1920's, real estate dealers came to him for locations of different pieces of property. He could tell them just where they could find all the old government corner stakes. After it was surveyed, Bonafacio was changed to Disston City, the name chosen in honor of Hamilton Disston.

Mr. Lock was the first Postmaster. The building where he housed the post office had a general store downstairs and a large room upstairs which was used for a church.

In 1876, Henry Slaughter, then about 18 years of age,



bought from the State forty acres of land for \$40.00 between Lakeview and Tangerine Avenues and east of 31st Street S. On this property was an Indian shell mound. Shortly thereafter, during the rainy season, Mr. and Mrs. William Roberts, another family who settled in the Maximo area, lost a small child, and this shell mound was the only spot of land above water, so he gave them permission to bury the child on his property. He later donated the property for a cemetery, and that is the way Glen Oak Cemetery was started — the first in this area. Our old "Black John" and his wife are buried there with the white people.

In 1886, a schoolhouse was built on Disston Avenue, now 49th Street, and 27th Avenue S. Arthur Norwood was the first schoolteacher and Clara Slaughter was one of the first pupils. Henry Slaughter was Superintendent of this school until Pinellas County was founded.

In 1880, Henry Slaughter married Mary Elizabeth Nash. Her parents, Mr. and Mrs. William Nash, brought their family just after the Civil War in covered wagons from McRae, Georgia, and settled in the Lealman area. Martha Slaughter married Alec Leonardy, an Italian. Melissa Slaughter married Frank Futch, a Frenchman, and their grandson Ruffus (Nat) Futch is now connected with Maas Brothers' store in St. Petersburg.

During the sailboat era, my father, Henry Slaughter, was one of the captains who operated these vessels which carried passengers and freight between New Orleans, Baltimore, and other ports. He has told us of the many hazardous experiences during hurricanes — how the mast would break and the waves would roll over the deck making it necessary to even tie themselves to the deck to keep from being washed overboard. I can remember as a child the happy times we children had with him on these huge sailing vessels.

This was a very happy era; everyone helped each other. Their amusements were square dancing, socials, horse racing, sailboat racing, and entertainments which were held in the church auditorium.

When I was three years of age, my Sunday school teacher, Mrs. Ingersoll, taught me the Psalms from the Bible and during the entertainments she would stand me on a table so everyone could see me and I would recite the Psalms.

All of my uncles, then young men, had oxcarts for amusement. Some of the families raised sugar cane. One of the happiest times was going to cane grinding and making and

pulling taffy candy.

Let me relate a few experiences to prove how wild and dangerous it was during these times: A Mr. and Mrs. Murphy and baby lived in a small one-room cabin, with not even a door to close, in the jungle area. Mr. Murphy, while preparing to go to Tampa on horseback to get supplies, put plenty of wood near the door so Mrs. Murphy could keep a fire. Matches were unknown and they had to keep a fire burning all the time. While Mr. Murphy was gone, during the night a panther came and walked back and forth in front of the fire and kept howling. When the panther would go far enough from the fire, she would throw another stick of wood on. Just before daylight, he went a short distance from the cabin and climbed a tree. When the husband returned the next morning, he had just one shell for his gun. It was either he or the panther. Just as the animal was ready to spring, he fired the gun and hit him right between the eyes. He was six feet long from his nose to the tip of his tail, and the fire between him and the cabin was the only thing that saved the mother and child.

The schoolhouse on Diston Avenue had three props on either side to support the building during storms while the children were in school. It was later jokingly referred to as "Prop College."

In 1897, during my first year in school, my teacher, Mrs. Weihman, gave the first-graders a recess so she could hear the lessons of the older children. While playing we heard something rattling and I made all the other children stand back while I went to look for the thing that was rattling. I soon saw one of the largest rattlesnakes I have ever seen. It was coiled and ready to strike. I will never know why he did not strike me as I was in striking distance. I was only five years of age and knew nothing about snakes. But I thought I had to protect the other children.

In later years, the name Disston City was changed to Veteran City, then to Gulfport, and incorporated in 1912. Henry Slaughter was one of the first Councilmen. Lawrence Renney was the first Police Officer and Tax Collector. I worked in the tax office. In the year 1910, I was bookkeeper for William Coleman. At this time Mr. Coleman was transforming Central Avenue between 9th Street and Beach Drive [in St. Petersburg] from a deep sandy road to a paved street.

In 1913, I married Milton W. Smith. We had two children: Mary Lu who in 1934 married Robert Davis of Orlando; and

Milton Henry Smith who is now teaching school in Milledgeville, Georgia.

Milton W. Smith, a surveyor, worked for the St. Petersburg Investment Company from 1912 to 1917. He surveyed all the streets and lots west of 16th Street to Boca Ciega Bay. He also did the surveying for Gandy Bridge and the golf courses in this area.

In 1937, I married William Jerrett of Ontario, Canada. My Grandfather Slaughter married Rebecca Arnold in Madison, Florida, in 1855. He was a Confederate soldier; he died while serving and was buried in Petersburg, Virginia. Grandpa Nash married Christina [copy illegible here]. He died here in 1886 and is buried in Glen Oak Cemetery. Grandmother Barnett and Grandma Nash both died here in the 1900's.

Henry Slaughter passed on in February 1929. Mary Slaughter died in June, 1937.

The last existing landmark is the home of one of the first settlers, the Early family. It is owned and occupied by the Steinwinder girls now.

I understand that Mrs. Whitbeck is thinking of leaving her property for a memorial. As this is the very spot my Grandmother, the first settler, lived and raised her family, I can think of nothing more appropriate.

— *Florence Slaughter Jarrett*

## CHAPTER 3

### SOME WONDERFUL MEMORIES ABOUT EARLY SETTLERS

My great-grandparents, James Barnett and Rebecca Slaughter Barnett, were the first settlers to build a home in what is now Gulfport. They arrived here in 1868. Rebecca was the widow of Samuel Slaughter, a Confederate soldier who died at Arlington, Virginia, August 18, 1862, as a result of war injuries. At the war's end, my Great-Grandmother Rebecca and her three children, Martha, Melissa, and Henry, left their home in Madison, Florida, in search of a new home. Rebecca hired a driver and loaded all her possessions onto two oxcarts and headed south. The number of days that they traveled is not known, but eventually they arrived in the area that is now Clearwater. After looking the area over, Rebecca counted twelve other families already living there. She decided it was too crowded, and they traveled on.



By this time Rebecca and her children were about destitute and out of supplies, so they traveled to Tampa in search of work. Rebecca got a job as a cook at the Ft. Brook Army Hospital where Civil War soldiers were cared for. While there, she met James Barnett, a Confederate soldier who had been severely wounded during the capture of the Union gunboat, *Water Witch*. On the 26th of April, 1866, she and Barnett were married.

They lived in Tampa until Barnett had recuperated enough to move. On a spring day in 1868, they left Tampa in a sailboat. At sundown that day they arrived at the area that is now between 51st and 54th Streets, on the shore of Boca Ciega Bay. In this area they found a high bluff (now mostly leveled) where they built a temporary palmetto hut.

After looking the area over for several days, the Barnetts decided they had found the place where they wanted to live. The family homesteaded an area between what is now 49th Street and 51st Street and from what is now 22nd Avenue S. to the Bay. Barnett built a log cabin and later a large two-story house at what is now the northwest corner of 49th St. and 26th Avenue S.

The family cleared some of the land and set out a large orange grove. Rebecca planted orange trees from seeds, using a pointed stick to poke holes in the ground. The early settlers in this area lived well, for food was plentiful. Deer, wild turkeys, wild cows and hogs, and even bears were abundant. The waters of Boca Ciega Bay were pure and clean and there was an abundance of mullet and other fish, oysters, clams, scallops, stone crabs, etc. The settlers learned to make use of everything the land had to offer, taking only enough to feed their families. All other supplies had to be acquired in Tampa which could only be reached by sailboat or by making a two-day trip around the top of the Bay by oxcart. When coffee could not be obtained, they often ground black-eyed peas as a substitute.

As people filtered in, they settled in what is now Big Bayou, then known as Pinellas Village. By 1876, Pinellas Village had seven stores, a good harbor, a hotel, and a post office. The village supplied the early settlers and also shipped farm produce, so trips to Tampa became unnecessary.

The first school was built in what is now Gulfport in about 1884, on the northeast corner of what is now 49th Street and 27th Avenue S. The school was called Prop College because the building was propped up by pine saplings to keep it from

being blown down during heavy storms. Some children would pole their boats across the Bay to attend school, and some would even wade to school if the tide was low. There weren't any grades as we now know; the children simply went through all the books the teacher had and generally wound up with about an eighth-grade education.

Social activities in the area included square dancing, box suppers, quilting parties, and activities held in the church. There were also sailboat, oxcart, and horse races. It was a happy life for most people. They were hard-working and most fared fairly well.

In 1884, Hamilton Disston came to what is now Gulfport with plans to develop Disston City on thousands of acres of land he owned on the lower Pinellas peninsula (then southern Hillsborough County). A large area was platted out into five and ten-acre plats, and the plans called for a wide road to be built along the waterfront. Disston built the Waldorf Hotel on the shores of Boca Ciega Bay. Lumber was brought in from Appalachicola by boat to build it. He also built a dock, three stores, some houses, and for a few years Disston City was a reality. About 1885, quite a few parcels of land were sold.

Disston was a very wealthy man and had great dreams for his city. He had a lot of business connections in the north and knew that there were plans to build a railroad in the area. He thought the railroad would follow along the Bay and come to his dream city. For a number of years he made a hard fight for Disston City, advertising it as far away as England. A few people moved into the area, and the first newspaper in the area, *Sea Breeze*, was published. His dreams for his city were shattered when the railroad went into St. Petersburg instead of into his planned city.

In 1906, Frank Davis — a good friend of Disston's — decided to make another real estate development out of Disston City. He divided about 200 acres of land and, with the hope of attracting Civil War Veterans, he named his land Veteran City. A large dedication ceremony was held with several hundred people attending, but despite a great beginning, the plans did not meet with success. Finally, on October 12, 1910, a town meeting was held in the Casino, and of the 38 residents in the community, 23 voted for incorporation and 7 voted against it; and the town of Gulfport came into being.

During all of the preceding time, Pinellas County was part of Hillsborough County. No money was ever given to this



part of the county for schools or roads — Tampa had the largest population and that is where the votes were!

People in the lower part of the county found it almost impossible to drive to Tampa because of poor roads. They had to zig-zag around swamps, bays, and pine woods. In some places wheels would sink into the mud up to the hubs. In January, 1907, a party of motorists set out to prove how bad the roads really were. They left St. Petersburg for Tampa and were three and a half days on the road! They had to detour many miles out of the way because a bridge was broken down; they even ran into a forest fire! They eventually reached Clearwater and found out they could not buy gasoline and had to walk many miles for it.

Finally, after struggling from 1887 until 1911, Pinellas was made a separate county in 1912.

St. Petersburg was founded in 1888. The town was surveyed and platted by the Chief Engineer of the Orange Belt Railroad. I believe that Hamilton Disston should be given credit in helping to establish St. Petersburg as it was probably his publicity of Disston City that brought people to the area at that time.

From May 1, 1880, until October 16, 1889, Gulfport was named Bonafacio. The first post office was located approximately on what is now 51st Street, between 28th and 29th Avenues S. The building also was a general store downstairs. Upstairs, the building was used for Saturday night dances and Sunday church services. John Lock was the first Postmaster.

Prior to the early '20s, the streets in Gulfport ran east and west and the avenues ran north and south, starting from Bay Drive. 30th Avenue was 1st Street; 29th Avenue was 2nd Street; 28th Avenue, 3rd Street; 49th Street was Disston Avenue; 52nd Street was Pinellas Avenue. Gulfport Boulevard was Washington, or Washingtonia — a narrow road with a small parkway dividing the lanes. The land where Winn Dixie now stands was used by a dairyman for his cattle. The dairy barn was on 49th Street and Tangerine Avenue. Much of the land was very low and flooded during heavy rains. The land where the Cheshire Cat Lounge is was all swampland with a fish house built on pilings. My grandfather, Henry Slaughter, grew rice there.

In 1904, on September 28th, the first streetcar was run in St. Petersburg. It stopped at Booker Creek at 9th Street and 6th Avenue S. because there was no bridge over Booker Creek. The streetcars were very small, holding only about 20

people. My father, Walter Roberts, was one of the first motor-men. When a bridge was finally built over Booker Creek, the streetcars came to Gulfport (then Disston City), but even then the cars often ran empty.

The streetcar company started a ferry boat service from Disston City to Pass-A-Grille Beach. For the first time people could go to Pass-A-Grille without having to travel over nearly impassable roads or go all the way around by boat. On holidays, the ferry boat service did a rush business and soon it became one of the most popular excursion trips around. The streetcars played a large part in the development of Gulfport. They not only carried passengers but also freight. The last streetcar made its run into Gulfport on May 7, 1949. I was aboard that car and it was a sad time for many of the old-time residents.

The present Casino is our third — the first one washed away during the 1921 storm. The second one was torn down in the '30s because it was in bad condition. The present one was built by WPA, as was our beloved pier.

The first library was in a small building (still standing) on the south side of 30th Avenue, directly behind the apartments on the corner of 30th Avenue and Beach Boulevard. Before becoming a library it was used as a clubhouse where ladies used to go to make pine needle baskets. I believe most of the books to start the library were donated by Mrs. Julia Lucky, a very wealthy lady who resided here at that time (probably around 1915).

The second post office was built on Beach Boulevard and 29th Avenue; Walter Brooks was Postmaster. The building was later moved, and today it is 5444-30th Avenue S. and used as a residence. The next post office was in the former Hickman office building.

Around 1908, most of the land from 30th Avenue to the Bay was dredged in. The tide flats reached as far as 29th Avenue.

The present Stetson Law School was originally a luxury hotel — the Rolyat. Babe Ruth and Al Capone were among famous people reportedly staying there. The hotel did not prosper and soon closed. It stood empty for several years and opened in the '30s as the Florida Military Academy.

The first Roman Catholic Mass held indoors in Gulfport was in 1909 in the home of my Great Aunt Sophie Steinwinder, on 51st Street between 28th and 29th Avenues S.

I would like to end my story by saying that I was born in

Gulfport and have lived my entire life here. During my childhood, Gulfport was a little village with only a few hundred people. It was a little paradise on earth. Boca Ciega Bay was as clean and as bountiful as it was when my great-grandparents came in 1868. The last thirty or forty years have brought many changes, and I regret that the future generations will not find the Bay as I once knew it. Dredging and filling have been hard on it. I hope the future will treat it more kindly than the past has. I pray that some time soon someone will determine where progress ends and destructions begins.

— *Florence Roberts Fussell*

## CHAPTER 4

### BARNETT'S BLUFF — A BEGINNING

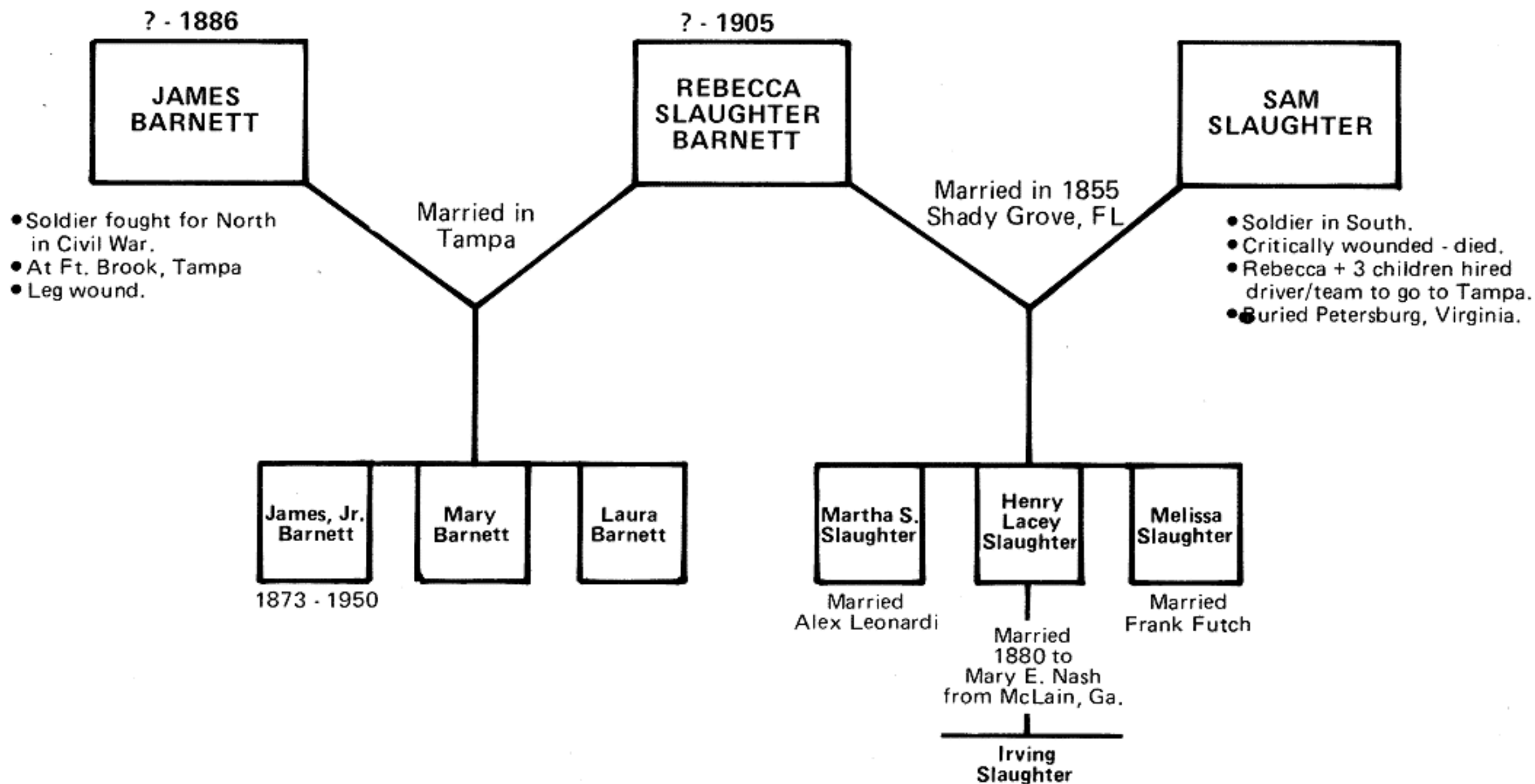
The sandy bluffs stretching several hundred yards along the shore of Boca Ciega Bay must have been like a beacon to the first family of Gulfport. James and Rebecca Barnett and Mrs. Barnett's three children from a former marriage were the first settlers in the present Gulfport area, in 1867. "The exact month is not known," said Cecil Slauter (spelling changed through the years from Slaughter), a descendant of Rebecca.

Rebecca married Sam Slaughter several years before in the little town of Shady Grove in north Florida. The Slaughters had three children — Martha, Melissa, and Henry. Sam, as a soldier of the Civil War fighting for the South, was critically wounded and died a few days later. After his death, Rebecca hired a driver and team to move her and her family from St. Marks, another little town in north Florida, to Tampa.

James Barnett fought on the side of the North during the Civil War and it was believed that he became a prisoner of the South. He was at Ft. Brook in Tampa when Rebecca and he met and were married. They first moved to Manatee, east of Bradenton, then the family came by boat into Boca Ciega Bay and landed on a sandy bluff near the end of current York Street and 52nd Street. They camped on the beach and built a lean-to for temporary quarters. "Later they built a house on York Street and at that location planted an orange grove," said Cecil Slauter.

James and Rebecca Barnett then had three children: James Jr., born 1873 (d. 1950) had the distinction of being the first white child born in Gulfport. The second child was Mary and the third was Laura.

# GULFPORT'S FIRST FAMILY





According to family records, the Barnetts sold their property on York Street in 1876 to Mr. Joseph Torres. They then relocated on 49th Street (Disston) near 26th Avenue S. Once again they planted an orange grove, and added several lemon trees. "Some of those trees may still stand," said Slauter. Mr. Irving Slaughter, father of Cecil, remembered they were huge lemons and says they used to chew on the thick skins. "They were sweet," he said. "But the freeze of 1898 got those lemon trees!" During this time several families came into the community and built houses.

Family letters tell of wild animals that roamed the woods. Heavy vegetation and thick timbers covered the peninsula — a protective home for panthers, wild turkey, deer, and bear. There were alligators and snakes, with snakes being one of the biggest problems to early settlers. Pioneers had to be extremely resourceful. They often made their own salt and candles. They made soap at times, also. Salt was processed by boiling down sea water until the water evaporated, leaving a salt residue. This was sometimes done in cooler weather when a fire was needed for warmth. Fresh water came from open wells. They were lined with wood and varied between 15-20 feet in depth. Water was dipped with a rope and bucket.

Irving Slaughter remembers pineapples planted under slatted coverings with moss draped over the slats for shade. He said there was plenty of guava and they were so sour they would "make a pig squeal." Seafood was abundant — fish, clams, stone crabs (Irving Slaughter said the crabs didn't have much meat, however). The water was so clear and it was filled with mullet. Shellfish were found in grassy flats west of the sand dunes. *Everybody* made their living by fishing. There wasn't a lot of money but food was plentiful.

Bette Smith of the *St. Petersburg Times* quoted Irving Slaughter as remembering eating mostly fish, sweet potatoes, turnip greens, black-eyed or cow peas, alligator pears (avocados), pomegranates, pawpaws (tiny fruit once growing wild on bushes in the area), and seagrapes when they turned purple.

Cecil Slauter tells of the first house in the early days as described to him by his father, Irving. "The house that my father was born in [1901] was built of vertical board and batten. In those days a lot of the houses were built with 'sawmill' lumber. It was easy to use, pitch pine was used for the foundation — termites couldn't eat it! There was no

plaster in the house and no window [panes]. There were only leather-hinged shutters on the outside to keep out the mosquitoes. In the daytime, the shutters could be pushed out and propped up with sticks and at night closed to keep insects out. In the wintertime, it was real cold in those old houses! There were plenty of cracks and no way to stop the wind from coming through. The only heat in those days was wood which was plentiful to be had and was gathered around in the woods. This information was given to me by my father, who is still alive and lives with me. He's 82 years old." (1983 interview)

Some of the oldest houses still standing in Gulfport are around York Street between 29th Avenue and the Bay, and another section is on Beach Boulevard between 25th and 28th Avenues. After 1905, the streetcar pulled freight cars out to Gulfport and placed them on a side track where the Gulfport Library now stands. Sometimes two, three or four carloads of building materials would be sitting there. The people who bought the material would go there and take it off the flat cars with horse and wagon and haul it to building sites. That's one reason why so many houses were built in that immediate area — it was so close to that freight platform where the streetcar dropped off the freight. The streetcar would then go on down to the Pier. If any of the cars were empty on its return, they would pick them up. People didn't hurry in those days. It seemed to be an honor system of delivery and pickup. In fact, there was no law system. If someone in Gulfport was wanted in St. Petersburg (or "Petersburg") for something or other, they would tell the streetcar conductor and he would pass the word down in Gulfport.

Another remembered conversation between Irving Slaughter and his son was about old cures and home remedies which were used before any doctor was in town. "One was turpentine. It was used for stingaree stings, nail punctures, cuts and minor things like that, and fishermen always carried it in their boats for stings and bites. . . . It was the best thing at that time for things like that. There was also a medicine called Asafetida. It was the gum from a camphor tree and the mothers used to tie a little sack around their children's necks with Asafetida gum in it. It was supposed to stop you from getting a cold or a sore throat. The grownups, of course, most of the time used what was called 'Bitters' which was 95% alcohol. This was a cure-all for everything! One of the blood poison medicines was to take a piece of flannel cloth and put

some sugar on it, set it on fire in a can, and let it smolder or smoke. The injury was held over the smoke and it would turn real brown. But that actually stopped the blood poison from setting in."

Cecil Slauter remembers cutting his foot; at home they put cobwebs on it to stop the bleeding and then his grandmother fixed up the old flannel rag and the sugar every two or three days for him to come over and smoke his foot. Another cure for the croup or cold for children was onion, tea, and sugar. A grated onion, sugar, and water was put in a pot and set on the back of the old wood stove to warm for drinking. Cecil added, "I don't know if it ever cured a cold or the croup, but I'll bet it made them say it did whether it helped them out or not. There's one other thing," he continued, "the old castor bean tree — the tender leaves were used as a poultice to put on anything that had to be drawn. That old castor bean leaf poultice would sometimes draw out a fishhook that got impaled under your skin!" One of the favorite drawing medicines that people made in those days was octagon soap and sugar. You scraped some octagon soap off the bar, mixed a little sugar in with it, kneaded it with your fingers, and put it on the boil or the splinter; it would draw it right out of your flesh.

"There was also an asthma cure back years ago that the people swore by," Cecil continued, "and that was actually gypsum leaves that you'd dry and roll into cigarettes and smoke. But today I think that might be called 'pot'!"

Other than the beach with all its attraction, some of the other games children played in the early days were London Bridge and Dare Base (this was played by four or more children lined up behind two lines; each side would dare the other side to approach their line and when they got too close, they could chase them and, if caught, they were put into the guardhouse — a square place drawn in the sand. Of course, if you reached the safety of your own line, you were free. This went on until the other side was all in the guardhouse.) Drop the Handkerchief was another early game, as was Tap on the Back and Jump Rope.

After the trolley connection was made, ice was brought in for ice cream parties. This was a special treat! Eventually, a few bicycles were brought in and "some of the people had an old billy goat that could pull a wagon for the kids to ride in," Slauter added.

Transportation was by foot through dense, tropical trails



or by boat in the very early days of Gulfport. A pier was built near the foot of York Street before the turn of the century, and small steamers began to dock and haul freight, passengers, and mail. Two of the small steamers were the *Mary Disston* and the *Mistletoe*. (The *Mary Disston* burned and sank near the pier and at low tide her remains can sometimes be seen.) In 1905, the streetcar line was built to the waterfront and this really started the town growing.

Before the turn of the century, the interest of Hamilton Disston, Joseph Torres, and William Miranda spurred the area into growth, and more families moved into the territory as a result. Some of the early families, and by no means all, which have been documented are as follows:

Tom Sawyer, York Street and 31st; George Woodruff, foot of 51st Street; William A. Rennie, 26th Avenue about 50th Street; Mr. Baumeaster, 1883, 51st Street and 31st Avenue; Joe Steinwinder, 1887, on 51st Street, south of 29th Avenue; Joshua White, 1890, foot of 52nd Street; Everett Miller, 1900, 51st Street near 31st Avenue; Mr. Fiarout, 50th Street and 31st Avenue; Mr. Meezie, 30th Avenue, Quenton; Mr. Sabine, Beach Boulevard, 27th Avenue; Edward George, Beach Boulevard and 28th Avenue; E. E. Wintersgill, Beach Boulevard and 25th Avenue; Lester Wintersgill, Beach Boulevard, 26th-27th Avenues; Mr. Weaver, York Street, 31st Avenue; Laus Nash, 49th Street, 24th Avenue; Mr. Whitted, 49th Street and 11th Avenue (Albert Whitted Airport in St. Petersburg was named after his son who was killed in Pensacola in his own airplane); Dr. Taylor, 49th Street between 24th and 25th Avenues (d. 1893); Walter McRoberts, Beach Boulevard and 27th Avenue (Veteran City Post Office in his home for a short period, then the first Casino); Aleck Leonardi, 49th Street and 24th Avenue; Church Gleaton, 52nd Street and 29th Avenue; Laurence Renney, 49th Street and 25th Avenue; Ade Renney, 50th Street and 26th Avenue; Sam Renney, 51st Street and 31st Avenue; Clarence Brantley, York Street and Bay; Jack Quinn, 31st Avenue and York Street; Mrs. Weatherol, 51st Street and 29th Avenue; Mr. Baluch, Beach Boulevard and 28th Avenue; Mr. A. L. Cusson, 49th Street and 29th Avenue; Henry Weathers, Delett Avenue and 52nd Street; H. E. Wendall, 29th Avenue and Beach Boulevard.

The coming of the streetcar line helped the community in ways other than transportation. The fishhouse owners could now ship their fish much faster. Before the carline, fish were



sent by boat to market, and it took much longer. A sawmill was built near the curve of the trolley line where Tangerine Avenue turned south onto Beach Boulevard. During that period, the entire area was covered with virgin pine. Millions of feet of lumber were cut at this sawmill and used in local building and also shipped to St. Petersburg lumber yards. There are several houses still standing in Gulfport which were built of lumber from this sawmill — after it was sent to the planing mill and returned. A ball field now covers the area where that sawmill was located.

At one time Gulfport was open range for cattle; there was no fence law at that time and so small landowners had to fence and protect their property from the wandering animals. The cattle were owned by Lykes Brothers Company, originating in Brooksville. During the spring, local residents were hired with their saddle horses to round up cattle. Some of the cattle were shipped for beef. The calves were branded and released to grow for another year. Some "cowboys" carried six-shooters, but only for snakes or in an emergency. Milk could be had for the taking, if you wanted to try your hand at a wild cow. During the roundup, the cattle were held in barbed wire enclosures for several days. When they were released, the ground would be well torn up and fertilized. The men would then plant gardens on the spot. In 1910, Gulfport incorporated, and the Lykes Company was notified to remove their cattle. They were driven east around Clam Bayou and south to the Maximo Point section. A few years later they had to be removed to the north end of Pinellas County.

Prop College, the first school in Gulfport, was formed in 1886 with Arthur Norwood as the first teacher. Mr. Norwood went on to become a successful merchant and eventually Mayor of St. Petersburg. Clara Slaughter was one of the first pupils and Henry Slaughter was a Principal of the school.

Mr. Cecil Slauter recalled further that his father remembered . . . "There's a cemetery . . . I believe it's at Union Street and Lakeview Avenue [22nd] called Glen Oak Cemetery. My grandfather, Henry Slaughter, donated that land to the people of Gulfport for a cemetery. There was a small girl, 9 years old, who died in Gulfport and there was no place to bury her locally, so Grandfather donated 2½ acres of that property and lots and lots of the old residents of Gulfport are buried there. Uncle Jim Barnett is buried there, and his

mother and father are also buried there — James and Rebecca Barnett.” Records revealed that James Barnett died in 1896 and Rebecca survived until 1905. She died after a fall in her home.

Many local residents can trace their lineage to the Barnett-Slaughter family. (Detailed tapes and interviews are on file at the Gulfport Historical Museum.)

— Genevieve Smith

## CHAPTER 5

### THE WATERFRONT OF GULFPORT

#### — *Wedded to the Sea since the First Settler* —

A small sailing craft cautiously worked its way toward a wild coastline showing no visible signs of habitation. Frequently the captain thrust a long pole into the water, testing its depth. Finally he brought his sloop into the breeze, flapping sails rustled down to the deck, and an anchor was heaved over the side. The date was 1868, the year that Florida returned to the Union. Captain James Barnett, recent Confederate officer, was feeling his wounds of battle as he relaxed a moment to scan a worn piece of brown wrapping paper that was his chart and map. This was the area he was determined to explore in order to stake out the first parcel of land to be settled in what was to become the City of Gulfport.

After two futile years at Manatee, Barnett was impatient to make a home here for his wife and family and to start a farm for their livelihood. By good fortune he had anchored off what is now 52nd Street, at a point where depth of water was favorable and a series of bluffs promised safety from heavy storms. Eagerly he boarded his small boat, leaving his wife Rebecca and the young ones safe on board the larger craft. With only a few supplies, he rowed toward the sandy beach to set foot upon his new domain.

In the days that followed, Barnett explored the interior and was happy with what he found — that is, high-level ground, rich soil, and wild game aplenty. Not a single person was in sight. Determined now, he staked out his claim, returned to his family, and set sail for Tampa, the county seat and U.S. Land Office where he made his purchase and filed for record. This done, Barnett replenished supplies and returned to his new homesite with his family.

The eagerness of restless men to find new homes in the Florida wilderness soon brought another settler to the area, Joseph R. Torres, a Spaniard who had fought in Mexico with Emperor Maximilian and later was a notorious carpetbagger in New Orleans. In 1876, Torres purchased 189 acres from the State and the properties of ailing Captain Barnett who, meanwhile, had suffered from wounds incurred during the victorious battle with the Union gunboat *Water Witch*. Before he died September 23, 1886, at age 53, James Barnett had fathered four children — James, first child born here; Laura, who married Joshua White; Mary Elizabeth, who became Mrs. Tom Sawyer; and Julia, later Mrs. Jack Quinn. The captain was buried upon an Indian sand mound under spreading oak trees of Glen Oak Cemetery. Rebecca Barnett, born December 30, 1834, died June 21, 1907, and was buried beside the captain.

A second settler moved into the community in 1876 — William B. Miranda — who, with Torres, headed a rapidly growing colony of newcomers from the Eastern States and the British Isles. Old deeds and papers take note of the rare background of William Bonafacio Miranda as a surveyor, investor, lawyer, notary public, and legislative representative. The U.S. Post Office Department for several years named the area Bonafacio until Disston City could be approved.

For at least twenty years after Captain Barnett came ashore in 1868, most passenger, freight, and postal routes were over the waters of Boca Ciega Bay and the Gulf of Mexico. A priceless source of local news appeared in the *Sea Breeze*, a sheet published by McPherson in Disston City in 1886-1887. The land route to Tampa was a week's struggle by oxcart or a two-day adventure by horseback. So sailing was the way to go anywhere!

Let me quote a few passages from the *Sea Breeze* when sailing craft provided the only means of transportation:

The schooner *Delia* under Captain Lowe arrived in the Bay Thursday, the 22nd [July 1886] and discharged her load of lumber and shingles for Mr. Stanton's house. She made the run from Pensacola in 3-1/3 days. . . . The schooner *Delia* is sailing from Disston to the Appalachicola area. . . . The *Cherub*, schooner, came in Sunday with Mrs. Hamilton and family aboard, with a load of household goods for Messrs. Anderson and Hamilton. . . . Mrs. Hewitt and family left Monday on the *Cherub*. . . . The *Ben S. Curry*, Captain Archer of John's Pass, lay at anchor here Tuesday night last week. She took a load of watermelons to Key West and brought back some pineapples, bananas, mangoes, etc. . . . The Sharpie *Sally Bell*



stopped here on her way to Tampa. She intends to make regular trips once a week between Tampa and John's Pass, stopping at Disston City both ways. . . . Sloop *Sneezer* takes mail to Tampa, relieving the *Cherub*.

By 1886, with the arrival of Henry Disston, his sidewheeler *Mary Disston* began runs from Cedar Key to Disston City and onto Tampa; and sailing craft gradually stepped aside.

The first licensed dentist in Florida, Dr. James M. Baggett, who had settled in Dunedin in 1887, commenced seeking clients along the Gulf coast, as revealed by an old log book in possession of his grandson, William C. Boyd. From Aripeka on the north, to Naples on the south, Dr. Baggett took the helm of his sailboat and made house calls along the way, including Disston City. Upon dropping anchor offshore, he rowed to the beach with his dental equipment and set up his temporary office in a nearby house. His arrival would soon be known by everyone. Tooth extractions were generally \$1.00 each. For \$2.00 the doctor would apply his foot-operated drill and make fillings with soft gold foil, capping them with the same. On most visits he was provided with a bed and meals, but with a fair wind blowing he would be anxious to get underway for his next port of call. Dr. Baggett was of more lasting fame as the first editor of a small newssheet in Dunedin that eventually graduated into the great *St. Petersburg Times* (now the largest newspaper on the Suncoast).

The topic of piers and pavilions on Boca Ciega Bay makes for interesting study. Fading memories and pages of history have lost the identity of many private piers. The largest and probably the most important in the earliest years was Miranda's Wharf, also called Disston City Wharf.

Miranda's Wharf extended out from J. R. Torres' general store property, which adjoined Miranda's holdings, at the foot of York Street for 640 feet. (See reproduction of surveyor's plat dated February 25, 1885, page 38. It is estimated that the outer portion of this pier reached waters with a depth of 7 to 10 feet, sufficient to float shallow-draft paddlewheel steamers, trading schooners and, of course, sharpies and a variety of smaller craft. It was the landing place for many lumber-laden schooners from northern Gulf ports like Pascagoula and Appalachicola, while Hamilton Disston was quick to put into service his own vessel, *Mary Disston*.

Cecil Slauter recalls another pier that caught fire. It spread to the *Mary Disston* which was quickly cast off; but she





burned and sank close by. Slauter maintains that her boiler is often visible at very low tides and he would love to raise it for a souvenir.

The Hibbs Fish Company pier, at the foot of 52nd Street, was important to the local economy. Fishermen delivered their catch which was transported to St. Petersburg on a "run boat" and later by refrigerator truck.

A series of piers at the foot of 54th Street began in 1907 when Elmer W. Wintersgill, later the first Mayor, built a private wooden pier with corrugated metal-covered slips; this was the original Boca Ciega Yacht Club (see history elsewhere in book).

The above pier was replaced in 1918 by a public pier made of wood, a favorite place of the populace for fishing and "sun-setting," with a refreshment stand nearby. It survived the hurricane of 1921, but by 1932 it was in poor condition and had to be destroyed. Fortunately, a WPA project was made possible in 1933-1934 at the same 54th Street location. This was the pier that three years ago was removed because of structural failures; a new one will be of concrete and aluminum and construction is promised.

The Casinos were an integral part of the Gulfport waterfront. The first one, in 1905, was ingeniously positioned at the foot of Beach Blvd. to permit the new streetcar to run right out to its end. Here passengers could either step off to enjoy dancing, music, and food, or step aboard the waiting ferry boat to cross the Bay to Pass-A-Grille Beach, the most popular beach resort of the day. The brutal hurricane of 1921 destroyed the first Casino. By 1923, a new Casino, owned by the streetcar company, was built, but it was short-lived. Poor engineering caused it to sway with the dancers and shiver in the storms. Before a major catastrophe could occur, it was torn down in 1925. It was not until 1935 that the third and present Casino was built, delayed because of lack of funds during the Depression. A WPA project was the savior, providing a substantial large structure at the foot of Beach Blvd. in shallow water. When the new bathing beach was pumped in, it became landlocked and safe from storms. The Casino became the center of social life in Gulfport.

### *Gulfport — The Fishing Village*

Almost every man and boy among the early settlers and right on through the Depression of the '30s was at least a

part-time fisherman when the mullet were running. In the hard years it was often the only way to make a few dollars and avoid starvation. Thank God for the plenty of the Bay!

It is said that at one time more mullet could be caught with a pitchfork than a net, though that plenty drove the price to fishermen down to a cent or two on the pound. It is strange that no one was ever able to pack these fish in cans or bottles in a commercial way. H. Baumeister did on a small scale in 1886. Joe Roberts, at 94, is still hale and hearty after a lifetime of fishing and selling fish to buyers like Buffer White, Bell Fisheries, and Dewey Taylor. Harriet Ben White, wife of Barney, tallied weight of fish for Hibbs Company. The latter operated on a larger scale than most, advanced credit for nets, food, and necessities. He owned offshore sailing vessels seeking red snapper, grouper, and mackerel. Some fishermen built their own skiffs in slack times, while boat-builders like Marin, Jack White, John Sheppard, and the Osgood brothers were professional builders.

In spite of hard times and lack of variety in the diet, which besides fish was a few greens, some fruit, maybe dried beans, sailor's butter (avocado), and bread, these people were a hardy lot. Often a "porker" was slaughtered for fresh or smoked meat, and on lucky days papayas (paw paws) or black-eyed peas (cow peas) were eaten. Sometimes fishermen were treated to sea turtles, heart of palm, coon and squirrel meat, grits, clams, roasted scallops, crabs both soft and hard, and perhaps a snort of locally-made spirit! In the '20s some money was to be made transporting bootleg liquor, and some made pretty good stuff themselves that sold at \$10 a quart! The recipe seemed to be something like this: "Shorts" (a cow feed, mostly corn) made into mash, add sugar and let stand a few days; add yeast and let stand 4 days; strain off liquid and run through still. It carried a whollop — drink sparingly! Old-timers like Lloyd Mann, Ralph and Sonny Aylesworth remember the good days as fishermen but none furnished this recipe!

The hurricane of 1921 and the lesser storms like that of 1926 set fishermen back in their struggle, Irving Slaughter maintains; but in the long run they prospered. Mrs. Wessie Gleaton recalls how her husband, born in 1902, and her son after him, fished under sail at first but longed for an engine in their boat. Eventually they mounted an old automobile engine to drive them along. It is claimed that theirs was the first power-driven skiff in this area.



The coming of ice to St. Petersburg's plant made it possible to broaden the market for Gulfport fish all the way to Georgia by truck.

### *Boats and Ships of Gulfport*

The impenetrable forests that covered the Bay area at the time Captain Barnett made his first landing forced all commerce to take advantage of the boulevards at no cost afforded by the waters of the Gulf and Bay. While requiring plenty of skill to navigate the approaches to Pass-A-Grille and the sandbars of the Bayou, it definitely was the way to go for many years. There were problems though in transferring cargo and people from boats to the beach until piers could be built, including the magnificent wharf of W. B. Miranda. The earliest chart of the area was a Coast and Geodetic Survey #177, dated 1878, showing that Captain Barnett had selected a different area but it had boomed anyway. Most of the craft taking advantage of the waterways were sail, which dominated maritime activity at no cost for fuel. They were, in part, the following vessels. *Mystery*, sharpie, Capt. Edmunds; *Ben S. Curry*, sharpie, Capt. Archer; *Jesse May*, schooner, Capt. Edwards; *Delia*, schooner, Capt. Low; *Cherub*, schooner, Capt. Whitehurst; *Dart*, sharpie, Capt. Arthur; *Ada Norman*, sharpie, Capt. Williams; *Emmeline*, schooner, Capt. Keissel; *Pearl*, schooner, Capt. Axleton; *Sally*, sharpie, Capt. Shaw; *Pontiac*, sharpie, Capt. Shaw.

Daring shipowners soon were discharging pine lumber from Alabama, passengers from the rail end at Cedar Key, and frequent runs to the county seat at Tampa. Less than seven feet of draft was necessary for vessels, especially coming in the ever-changing passes from the Gulf. Steamers were limited to shoal-draft paddlewheelers. At the turn of the century the advances in gasoline engines only pressured for road transportation through the woods, but created inboard engines for marine craft. While oil hung on for a long time, motor boats were ideal for traversing the winding channels of Boca Ciega Bay except for fuel expense compared to wind power.

The arrival of the popular streetcars to the Gulfport waterfront about 1905 and the simultaneous direct connection to Pass-A-Grille created heavy traffic of tourists. At the same time there was a bustling traffic of people from Tampa to St. Petersburg aboard the *Favorite* and the *Anthea*, the *H. B. Plant* and *Harry G. Drees*, likewise with streetcar connections to Gulfport.



This beautiful route was crippled by the 1921 hurricane which destroyed the first Casino dock and the construction of the McAdoo bridge to Long Key about the same time. Some of the favorite steamers between Gulfport and Pass-A-Grille were the *Gypsy*, 180 passengers; the *Maine*, 30; *New York*, 65; the *Florida* and *Spray*, 50 each.

In 1907, Walter Fuller, who owned the streetcar line, added the Boca Ciega Boat Line and Joe Merry ran *The Uncle Sam* with Captain White as the Merry Boat and Transportation Company. In 1947, Captain Walter Williams had *The Don*; he was later Mayor of Gulfport.

Clam Bayou in its heyday was a shallow indentation of the Bay just east of Osgood Point, a treasured refuge for up to 50 fishing skiffs and a boat-building center for many of the early years. The bayou channel into Boca Ciega Bay, called a "wash channel," carried the tidal current in and out of the bayou. Dredging was done, paid for by the fishermen, Osgoods, and the Willis Subdivision, a nearby property owner.

Bert Mann's boat shop made fishing skiffs. Aylesworth brothers and others were fish buyers, but Osgood Marine Ways and Custom Boat Builders were by far the largest operation. Neil and Orion Osgood were brothers born on the Island of Banaca, a former British possession on the Honduran coast where their father, a native of New Hampshire, was a boat builder. All three men came to St. Petersburg in 1922 and worked for the Avery and Robert Boat Works. Opportunity beckoned in Gulfport where they set up a boat-building and repair shop on what came to be known as Osgood Point. Their marine railway was the best in the area and off-shore fishing vessels and work boats up to 60 feet were built here. About 12 skilled workers were employed. One of the last boats they built was the *Pine Key*, with lumber cut on Pine Key (later known as *Tierra Verde*). Osgood also had a marina that berthed about 35 yachts. One Saturday in March, 1956, a fire completely destroyed the entire operation. It would have been the end of the line except for the donations and assistance given by literally hundreds of well-wishers. Neil Osgood, the surviving owner, constructed a metal building and mobile boat lift to service yachts of the area. Unable to obtain a satisfactory lease from the City of Gulfport, he dismantled the shop and equipment and retired in 1977. His facilities are badly missed by the local boat people. (At this writing no leasees have come forth to replace the Osgood shop.)

### *Let's Go to the Gulfport Beach!*

Who knows of a better combination of glorious sunsets over the Bay and Gulf, with white sails on blue waters and soft, clean sand to tickle your toes? Here you can add a swing, ice cream cones, a game of horseshoes, Bocci, and a spirited discussion of "the way it was." And, during afternoons, add professional retired musicians from the Big Band era of yesteryear blending into unforgettable harmony. At least three groups of music-makers have for years played their hearts out to the lucky people on Gulfport Beach.

Charlie Tripoli started it in 1964. Ernie Pavolato, John Murphy, and others played three or four times a week in good weather.

In 1957, fresh sand was pumped into the beach and City pride keeps it as neat as a pin. Swimming is great, with two tides every day to bring a clean supply of Gulf water. True to its heritage of the sea, Gulfport has always had a wonderful beach.

### *Some Waterfront Landmarks*

#### **Waldorf Hotel**

No history of the waterfront would be complete without mention of the 1884 Waldorf Hotel, with 26 rooms of what has been described as "unbelievable luxury." It was reportedly built by Captain William B. Miranda right on the water, close by his wharf, and opened with all the pomp of New York City on Christmas Eve. It was Hamilton Disston's darling, the Philadelphia saw-manufacturer who was pouring millions of dollars into Florida real estate. The view of the surrounding wilds and Boca Ciega Bay must have been inspiring to visitors from the East. The hotel was partly destroyed by the great gale of 1901. Never a success, it was finally dismantled and the lumber taken away to build small houses in the area.

#### **Boca Ciega Inn**

This was the showplace on the waterfront when built, about 1912, at the foot of 54th Street. Popular as a winter resort and renowned as a dining spot, this 50-room inn was bulldozed one sad day (see story by Allean Davis elsewhere in this book).

### **Gulfport Municipal Marina**

When World War II was in the past, a surge of public pride in Gulfport centered upon the most lovely asset: the waterfront. Henceforth it became "The Gateway to the Gulf of Mexico." A shallow lagoon with several mangrove islands in the center was transformed into a fine boat basin by Benton, the dredge company who also deepened the channel to Boca Ciega Bay. That was in 1957 and 1958, which also saw improvements like range lights to assist boats in entering the channel and sea walls to prevent shoaling. They built 120 covered boat slips. Before 1975, the sheds were in danger of being destroyed by heavy winds threatening also the yachts (mostly power boats) at the same time. The old wooden boat slips were replaced by modern concrete construction without covers. At this time, sailboats became popular and the new marina, with a total capacity of 265 boats, has a waiting list. The final addition to its modernization was the Marina building, 1984, with the Harbormaster's office, marine store, and excellent facilities. For boats on trailers, unequalled accommodations for launching are provided with plenty of parking space.

### **Coast Guard Auxiliary**

This organization, on the outer tip of Osgood Point, is officially known as Flotilla 716 of Gulfport Marine Reserve and Training Group. It is operated by 50-60 dedicated members and was authorized by the U.S. Coast Guard on May 22, 1961. Conrad F. Johansen was the first Commanding Officer. The group was housed in a wooden building constructed by the members on City property June 26, 1962, through a lease agreement. Duties of Flotilla 716 are, briefly, as follows:

To aid and assist the U.S. Coast Guard in evacuation, rescue, and saving of lives and property; To promote marine safety (give on-board equipment examinations); and To instruct boatmen in promoting safety and operation of boats.

### **Retired Coast Guard Officers' Club**

When World War II was over, a large number of Coast Guard officers were retired from service and sought more comfortable climate in Florida. They felt the need of spinning yarns about their varied services. The men sought a club site where families could enjoy the Gulfport waterfront. The City leased them a suitable location (now the Boca Ciega



Yacht Club). All hands turned to the construction of a sturdy building when the lease was signed March 11, 1953. Unfortunately, the men were getting older, and membership fell away until 1965 when they gave up the Club and turned it back to the City.

**Lions Club** — Described elsewhere in this book.

### **Mariner's Cove Marina**

This is the only privately-owned marina in Gulfport, and is situated at the foot of 51st Street. Originally built by Bob Hadley, it has been owned by Dave Steinke since 1978. It is of the hi-dry storage type, soon to be doubled in capacity.

### **Gulfport Yacht Club**

The club was the spontaneous eruption of sailing enthusiasm in 1938 when organized by "Pop" Allen. They had no clubhouse but the beach where they made their own small boats; they found that sailing and racing were unequalled in fascination. Early Commodores were Jim Flatter, James McLellan, and Leo Dyke. Suddenly World War II had all these boys in uniform, and activity at the clubhouse stopped. After the war the club was going "great guns" again. An old army barrack refurbished was the clubhouse. From here on, Howard Snyder was the moving spirit. The Gulfport Yacht Club was sponsored by the Lions who encouraged youth activities not only in sailing but Sea Scouting as well.

In 1960, the City leased the boys a parcel of land adjoining the Lions' clubhouse. This was built largely by the members. The City dredged a channel from the harbor entrance to the docks at the clubhouse. Under Snyder's guidance, the members offered some fine invitational regattas for visiting competitors and entered other sailing events elsewhere, often returning home with the "bacon." One of the boys, Walter Most, became a national sailing champion.

### **The First Boca Ciega Yacht Club**

An ancient postcard of about 1910 illustrates "the earliest yacht club in lower Pinellas County." It was built at the foot of 54th Street by Elmer E. Wintersgill and operated by Mr. and Mrs. Lawrence Renny, an early Town Marshall. The old club was built on pilings but wind and waves took their toll and it succumbed about 1918.



### The Present Boca Ciega Yacht Club

On July 21, 1965, the Sunshine City Boat Club, long a fixture in St. Petersburg harbor 'til ousted by the City to make room for the *Bounty* exhibit, signed a lease with Gulfport. The club was awarded a settlement of \$25,000 and came to Gulfport with \$30,000 and a strong, growing organization. The first order of business was to change the name to the Boca Ciega Yacht Club, after its predecessor of 1910. The lease was for the building and grounds of the Retired Coast Guard Officers' Club, including a tidal flat which was dredged into a lovely deep yacht basin with boat slips, launching ramp, and boat hoist. The dredged fill was used to raise the level of leased land, the balance being pumped across the channel to the old Police shooting range.

The clubhouse was rebuilt and enlarged. Important names in the early years were Commodore W. C. Peterson and City Building Inspector Bill Nettling, former Chicago yachtsman. Early improvements were dedicated on April 6, 1966, with flag-raising, ribbon-cutting, and the driving of a golden spike by member Jimmy Willcoxon.

The club has brought to the City over 200 members, over 100 sailing yachts in wet and dry storage, and many of the boats in the City Municipal Marina. It has also brought a biennial sailing school since 1967, well-known regattas, and a vibrant impetus to sailing activity at the Gulfport waterfront.

— Carl A. Norberg, Ph.B.

**AUTHOR'S NOTES:** This portion of *Our Story of Gulfport, Florida*, Chapter 5, "The Waterfront of Gulfport," was written by Carl A. Norberg, a Ph.B. from the University of Chicago, a member of the Boca Ciega Yacht Club since 1948, and a member of the Gulfport Historical Society. He is deeply indebted to Helen Ross, Researcher for the Society, for her untiring assistance, and to many others, including J. B. Dobkin, Special Collections Librarian, University of South Florida - Tampa campus, for the use of Coast and Geodetic Survey Chart No. 177, dated 1876; Bert Williams, Nathan White, Neil Osgood, Howard Snyder, *The Sea Breeze*, the Aylesworth family, Richard Bozeman, Walter Fuller's *St. Petersburg and Its People*, Frank T. Hurley Jr.'s *Surf, Sand and Post Card Sunsets* published by Great Outdoors Publishing Company, St. Petersburg, the Gulfport Public Library Staff, Lloyd Mann, H. R. Slaughter, and Irving Slauter. We are also grateful to Ticor Title Insurance Company (formerly West Coast Title Co.) for the 1885 diagram of the first pier and deeds given to earliest settlers. I have other subdivisions to give to the Society.

—C.A.N.



*GULFPORT PIER — 1895*



*VETERAN CITY DANCE PAVILION — 1907-08*



*St. Petersburg and  
Veteran City Trolley  
Company and  
Alligator Promenade*

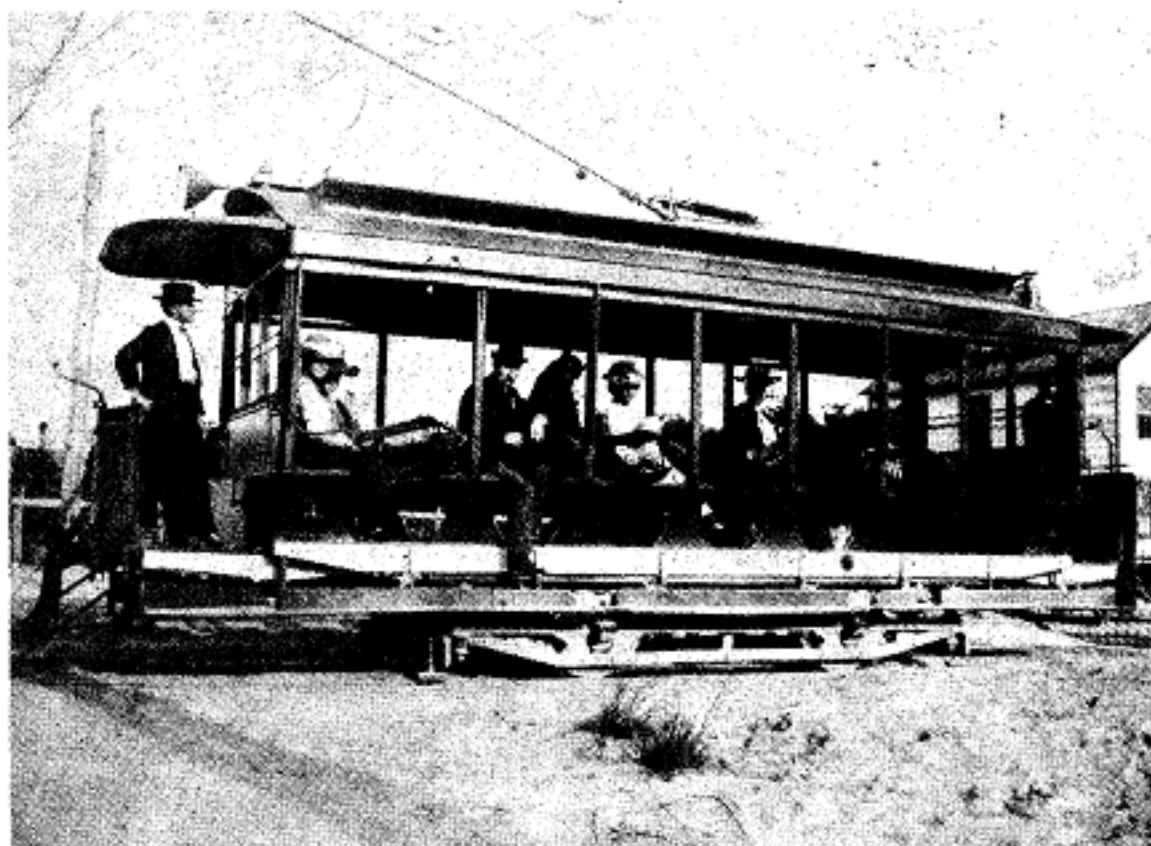
*Trolley Station —  
Veteran City,  
July 1908*



*Veteran City  
1907-08*



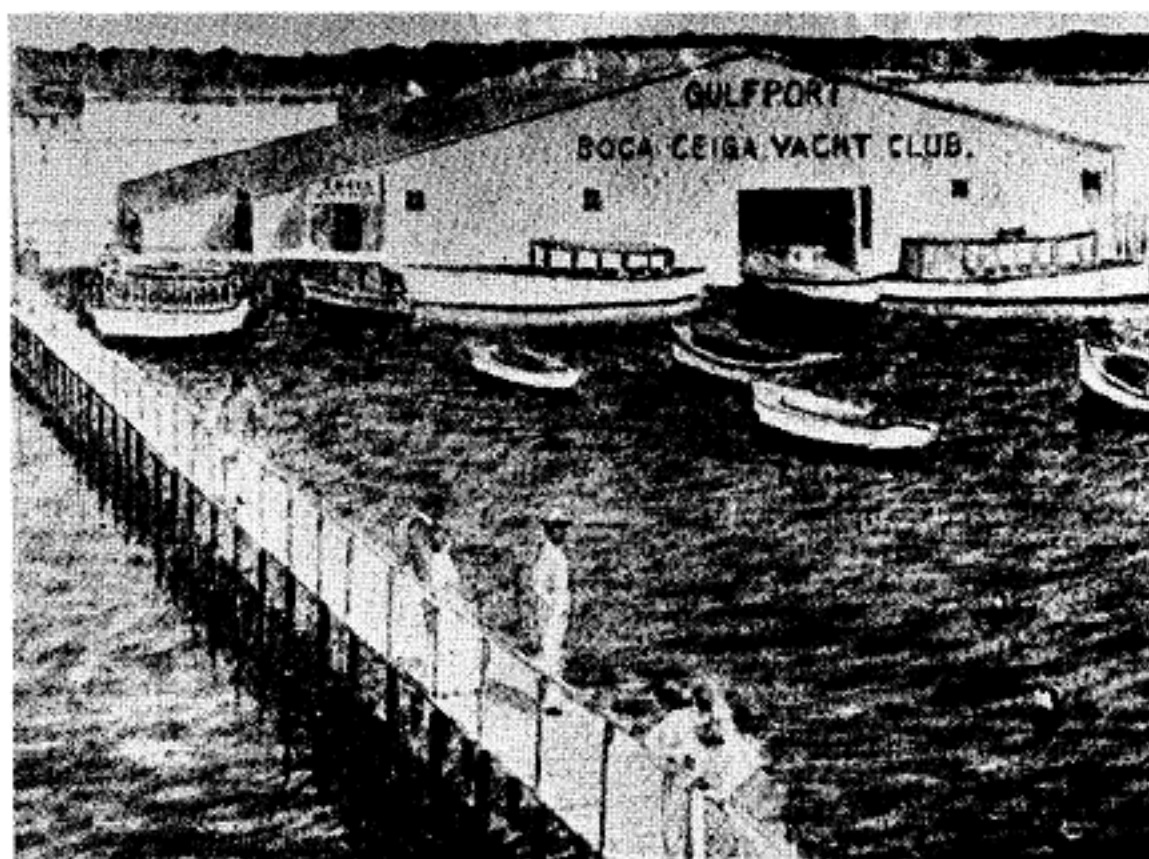
*Veteran City  
Trolley Car*



*Gulf Casino  
with St. Petersburg-  
bound trolley on  
Pier — about 1910.*

Courtesy W.B. Simonds

*Early Boca Ciega  
Yacht Club  
— 1908-18*



Courtesy St. Petersburg Times



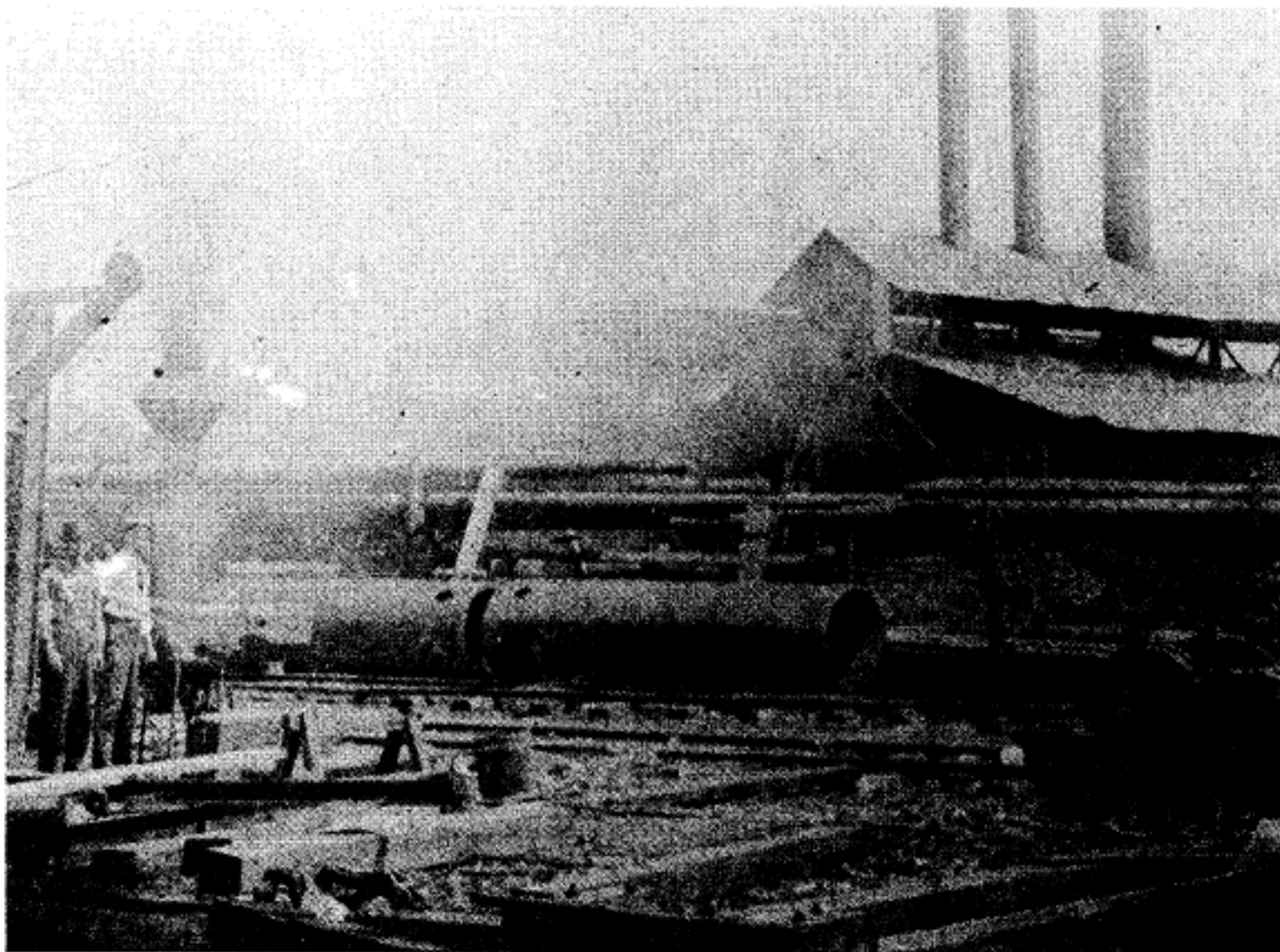


*Left to right: Mary Nash Slaughter, Laus Nash, "Grandma" Nash, Harrison Nash. Taken at Gulfport.*

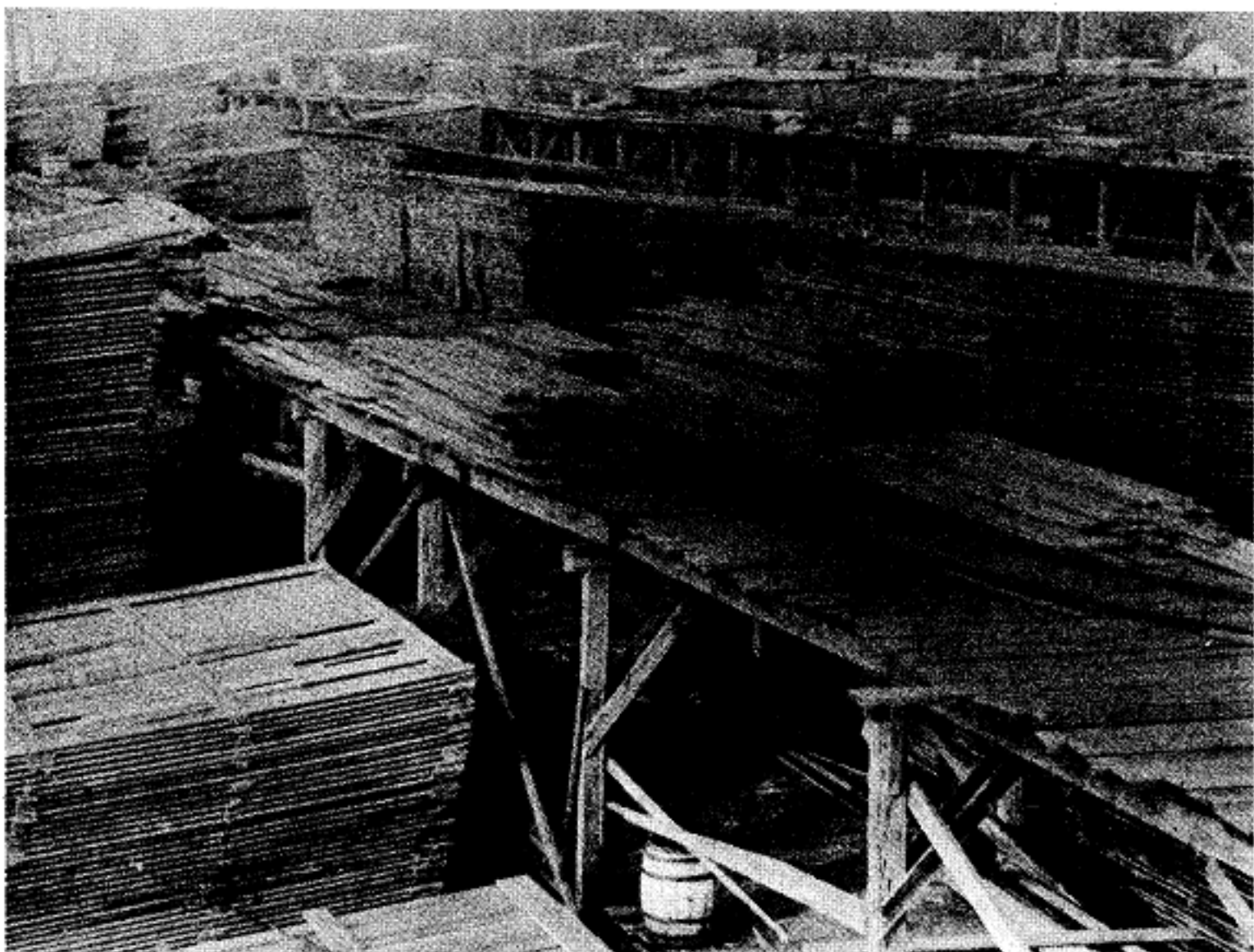
Donated to Gulfport Historical Society by Irving Slaughter



*BAY VIEW HOTEL — GULFPORT, 1913*



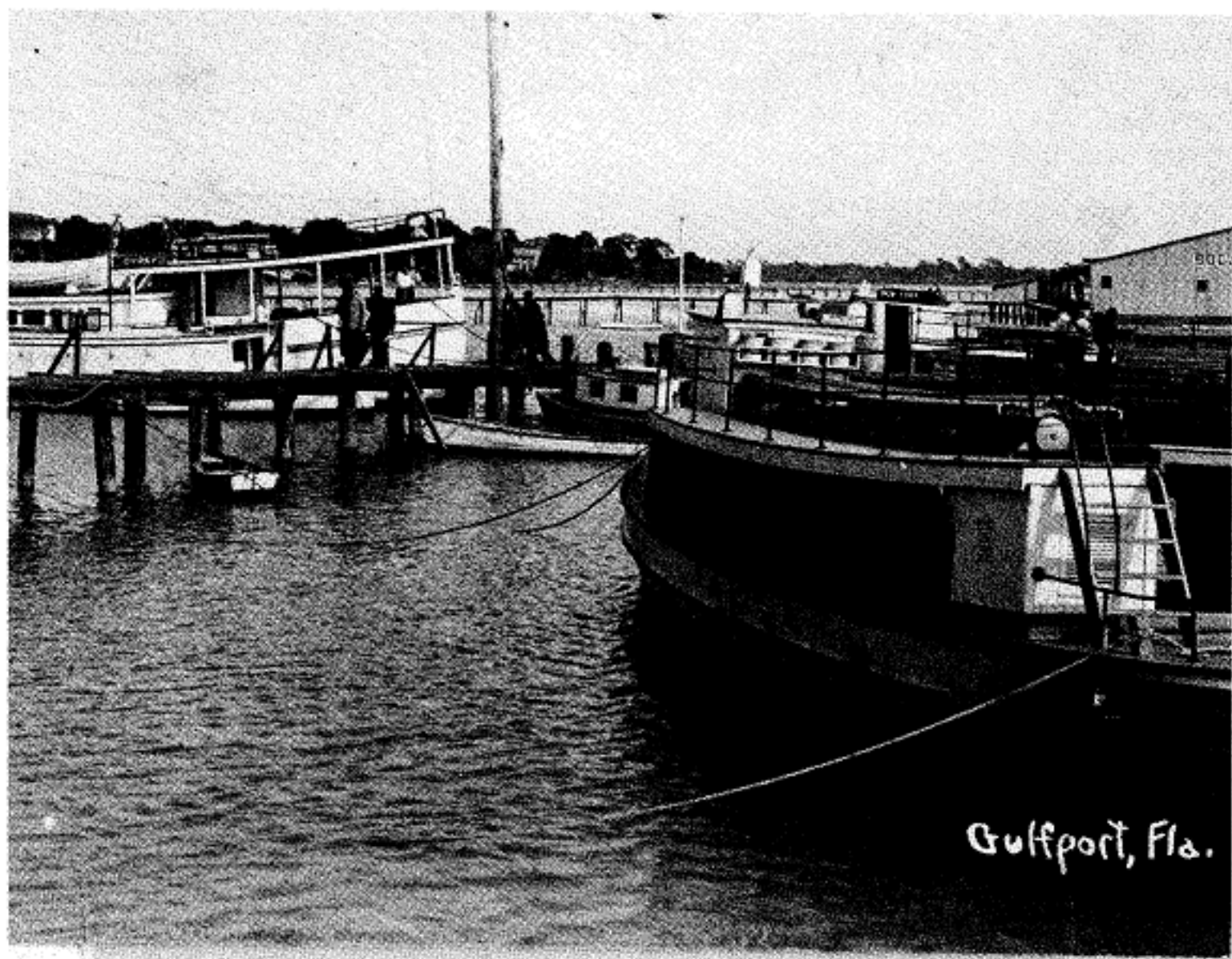
*This saw mill was built in 1907 by Mr. Singlehurst at the curve of the old streetcar line on Beach Blvd. and Tangerine Avenue. It was in operation for about three years, then torn down and moved to another location after all the trees were cut and sawed in the Gulfport area. A tram road (narrow-gauge rails) was built northwest of the saw mill to haul logs from the woods. The small railroad went in the general direction of present 58th Street and 15th Avenue S. Signs of the old road bed were present for many years.*







*Beach Blvd., looking from about 30th Avenue. Probably taken from Bay View Inn. (Postcard dated 2-18-15)*



*These were passenger boats running from Gulfport to Pass-A-Grille. Leander White, husband of Mrs. Ethel White, ran the Gypsy boat on left and the New York center background above the Florida. Harry and Guy Yawger also piloted boats in the same service. (Postcard dated 2-15-15)*



# How Our Village Grew



**CHAPTER 6****CHURCHES****CALVARY BAPTIST CHURCH****2126 Beach Blvd. S.***(formerly)*

Shortly prior to 1939, Rev. Louis A. Jackson and a small group of Christians banded together and held services in the Gulfport Community Hall, which they rented for 50¢ per Sunday. A Sunday school was begun, divided into seven classes, taught by Mrs. J. D. Gerard, Mrs. Brobin, Mrs. Susanne Gannon, Mrs. Otto, Mrs. Davies, and Rev. Jacobsen.

On Sunday, February 5, 1939, this little group organized into the Gulfport Community Church, an undenominational group, with Rev. Jacobsen as pastor and thirty-nine charter members.

The Board of Trustees were Harvey Glazier, Will Glazier, W. H. Otto, and Harvey Glazier was appointed Sunday School Superintendent.

Later in the year, Rev. Jacobsen resigned and Rev. Harris Bragan was called to be their pastor. Under his leadership the little church became mission-minded and by 1940, ten percent of all offerings were for missions.

On October 2, 1940, the name of the church was changed to The Community Bible Church of Gulfport.

In 1941, a charter was drawn up stating the object and purpose of the church to be "for the purpose of promoting the Cause of Christianity, to promulgate the Doctrine and Teachings of the Bible." A Board of Deacons was elected to manage the affairs of the church. New members must be born-again believers and voted in by a membership committee consisting of the pastor and deacons.

On January 6, 1944, Rev. Bragan resigned, and his brother, Rev. Murray Bragan, was called as pastor.

Two lots of land were purchased for \$200, and on those lots a worship building was erected for \$3,500 on the corner of 55th Street and 22nd Avenue S. in Gulfport. The first service in the new auditorium was held August 6, 1944.

The church soon earned the nickname of "The Little White Church of the Singing Pines" from the beautiful tall pine trees around the church. In these pines loudspeakers were placed so that chimes could be played to call people to worship.

On January 6, 1946, Rev. Murray Bragan resigned and Rev. Harris Bragan was recalled.

On October 5, 1949, a radio ministry came into being Sunday mornings at nine o'clock over Station WSUN for 15 minutes.

In 1949 and 1950, two additional lots were purchased and on April 18, 1951, it was decided to build a new church auditorium to accommodate the ever-increasing congregation. On January 27, 1951, the church mortgage was burned. Ground-breaking ceremonies, held May 27, 1951, featured Reese Whitworth, Chairman of the Board of Deacons, using the first spade.

On February 3, 1952, the new, beautiful church auditorium was completed and dedicated. Joseph Tibbetts was employed as Assistant Pastor.

New ministries were added March of 1953; house-to-house visitations, rest homes and hospital services, printed sermons sent out each month, and a book table and library added much interest. Nine missionaries were partially or fully supported. A bus service was used each Sunday to bring parishioners to church.

More lots were purchased for parking. Also, the need for an educational building was realized.

On October, 1957, Rev. Eric A. Folsom was called to pastor the church, and under his leadership a new educational building was erected. Missionary families were increased to 43, with a missionary budget of \$30,000.00.

Pastor Folsom remained as pastor for 25 years until his retirement April 4, 1980. Before his retirement, the church property on the corner of 55th Street and 22nd Avenue S. was sold to a business concern.

Five acres of land were purchased at 8800 Starkey Road, Largo, where a chapel and educational building were erected. Pastor Folsom's assistant, Rev. Jerry Lancaster, was called as pastor and now serves the growing church called Starkey Rd. Baptist Church.

— Alice Libby

### CHURCH OF CHRIST 901 - 49th Street S.

In like manner, as the Apostles carried out the great commission of Mark 16, so William Roe established many congregations wherever he went. His journey began from Michigan

during the early years of the Depression. Unlike the Apostle Paul, there was no "home" church sending him out, but the words of Jesus Christ took him many places.

One of these places was Gulfport, Florida. Seeing there was no local congregation, William Roe put an ad in the newspaper announcing the Church of Christ would meet at a rented location until a building could be erected. Six days a week the place was a bar. On Sunday, following a hard cleaning, it was a meeting place for the saints who dwelt in Gulfport.

In the early 1920's, William Roe the carpenter was asked to build the first permanent structure in which the church could meet. The first location was at 9th Street and 10th Avenue N., and seated 150. The "boom" days brought many more people to Gulfport. Soon William Roe was in demand as a Bible speaker. The congregation grew so much that another building was erected at 10th Street and 10th Avenue N. It was during this time that W. A. Cameron of Largo became their local preacher.

The move was made to the new 400-seat building. For the next three years, however, the great crash of 1929 was taking its toll. With so many people looking for work, the congregation dwindled.

Shortly thereafter, the church moved into a store on 49th Street and 1st Avenue S. that William Roe owned. From this location the members would stay only long enough until the new building was completed — where it presently is today. At night, the brothers and sisters would line their cars side by side and turn on the headlights so they could work on the building during the night.

The Diston Avenue Church of Christ is people carrying on where William Roe toiled greatly and prayed unceasingly. Many other local congregations from Florida through Ohio were established and/or strengthened because of William Roe's love of God.

—Robert Fincher

### CONGREGATION BETH SHOLOM 1844 - 54th Street S.

In 1950, a number of families of the Jewish faith banded together and conducted Sabbath and Jewish holiday services in the homes of Joseph Baumann, Max Emsig, and others, and usually the worshippers brought chairs. Jacob Adler



wrote a humorous column in *The Forward*, a Jewish paper printed in New York and popular with many visitors in Florida. He had enjoyed being in Gulfport and extolled the beauties of this area and thus attracted many fellow believers to Gulfport. His pen-name was Berle Kovner.

On May 18, 1951, the group received from the State of Florida its Charter of Incorporation as the Jewish Center of Gulfport, Inc. On April 21, 1952, a deed was recorded on two lots by Max and Minnie Emsig, for the purpose of building a synagogue, and on March 8, 1953, the Dedication of that synagogue was held. High tribute was paid to the Chairman of the Building Committee, Louise M. Barnett. Jacob Adler was elected First President of the Center.

On June 6, 1967, the Charter was revised by changing the corporate name to Congregation Beth Sholom. Services were conducted by volunteer members and occasionally a Cantor would be engaged for the High Holy Days.

Meyer Emsig served as President 1959 to 1963, followed by Albert Kessler. Arthur Sofsberg was a Spanish War Veteran and Charter Member of the congregation.

In May, 1970, the first Rabbi was elected — Morris H. Kobrinetz, who retired six years later. Three Rabbis have served since, but at present Rabbi Kobrinetz is serving from the pulpit until another Rabbi is chosen. He proudly remembers that on April 27, 1972, ground was broken for the building of an addition, and five months later, the new part housing a sanctuary, fully-equipped kitchen, the Rabbi's study and a library was completed. The cost was \$100,000 — half of which was given by other than members, who are now about 100. Several years ago they purchased part of Memerah Gardens Cemetery on Route 688 between Starkey and Belcher Roads.

Rabbi Kobrinetz serves with other clergy at civic affairs in Gulfport, and is obviously devoted to his special congregation of adults.

— *Rabbi Morris H. Kobrinetz*

## FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH OF GULFPORT 2728 - 53rd Street S.

The first meeting of the Methodist Church was the result of the concern of some of the early residents of what at that time was a small fishing village. Tradition says that first services were held in a log cabin known as "Prop" College,

located on 49th Street S. near 27th Avenue. But records vary. We know that services were also held in the Casino, located on the waterfront of this village, on Boca Ciega Bay.

In 1910, with the need for a permanent church, two lots were purchased on 28th Avenue S. from Jacob M. and Anna B. Zodges. A building was completed, crudely furnished, for the congregation sat on benches that were splintery and rickety. In the middle of the room stood a pot-bellied stove. If the day was cool, a stick or two of "lighter" took care of the chill.

In 1951, ground was broken and the cornerstone laid for the building that is part of the church as we see today. But what happened to the old church? Around 1956, it was moved across the street, given to the City of Gulfport to be used by the Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Red Cross, and the Gems, until the new multi-purpose center was built. Now it is the Museum and home of the Gulfport Historical Society.

Over the years, many have served our church as pastor. Organized in 1912, Rev. J. H. Daniel served as minister for one year. So many wonderful pastors have served over the ensuing years. 1929 brought John Branscomb to both Gulfport and Childs Park Methodist Churches. This outstanding young man was here for one and a half years before returning to college. He later became an outstanding bishop in the Methodist Conference.

On December 1, 1947, Rev. Elsie Davies began her long and successful pastorate in Gulfport. In 1951, with Rev. Davies at the helm, ground was broken for the new sanctuary. Roy Pippin was contractor — and in 1956-57 he again supervised, with the help of many, the construction of the Educational Building that is used for a church office and Sunday school rooms. This addition took place during the time Rev. DeWitt Farabee served our church.

In 1963, Rev. James Marshall Smith came to Gulfport. During the time he was with us, the church was completely remodeled. An addition was built, moving the main entrance from 28th Avenue to 53rd Street. A large social hall was also built, five additional rooms were added, and the main sanctuary was completely turned around.

Rev. Dwight McQueen came to First United Methodist Church in Gulfport in 1981, and today the church continues to grow under his leadership.

Mary Lou Gray, a young girl of about 15 years at this time, taught Sunday school during the time services were

held in "Prop" College. Mary Lou Gray was well known and loved by many of us. She was one of the founders of our church and served it in many capacities, setting a splendid example of a truly Christian life. She was born in Chicago October 15, 1893, moved to Gulfport in 1909, and graduated from St. Petersburg High School, Junior College, and the University of Florida. Mary Lou was employed by the Pinellas County School System for 34 years, including 25 years as Principal of Gulfport Elementary School, from which she retired in 1953. She and her husband Dick were well-known and loved for their participation in many community organizations. Dick Gray was affectionately known as the "Gulfport Artist" for his murals; he served on the Council and also managed the Casino for years. Mary Lou spent her long happy life serving others, and died here February 5, 1985. Her funeral was attended by many long-time residents of Gulfport, together with their children and grandchildren — all feeling blessed for having known her.

— Ruby Walker

### GULFPORT CHURCH OF THE NAZARENE 1000 - 55th Street S.

In late 1957, Rev. John Swentzel and his wife Mary began to hold services in the audio-video room at the Boca Ciega High School with seven people in attendance. Rev. Swentzel felt that God wanted him to start a church in the Gulfport area. He searched throughout the area, but felt drawn to the spot where the church now stands. He inquired about the availability of the property and was told by the owner that several had expressed interest in putting quite a lot of money down. Rev. Swentzel replied that his plans were to build a church, but as he was just starting, little money would be available. The owner challenged him by asking, "Where is your faith?" She promised to hold the property through the summer months, with nothing down, to see what might happen.

In the meantime, the small group moved to the old Community Hall to hold services, and their number increased. God supplied the money needed and the property was purchased. Members and friends helped with the building, and the first Sunday in January, 1963, found the group meeting there — in what was then called the new "Gulfport Community Church."



In 1976, Rev. and Mrs. Swentzel felt they could no longer continue in their work because of Mrs. Swentzel's failing health. The church then merged with the Nazarene group and became the "Gulfport Church of the Nazarene."

The new church was dedicated August 5, 1976. Rev. Ralph Moulton became the pastor. He did a wonderful job, helping the church enlarge and extend into the community.

In 1983, Rev. Ralph Moulton accepted a call to the Nazarene Church in New Port Richey and the Gulfport church welcomed Rev. Vela Vaughn. Under God's direction he is bringing soul-satisfying messages. He has a great gift for bringing out new points in our Bible studies and under his leadership our church is growing.

The foundation of the church is upon the Word of God. The direction is where God leads. The desire of our people is to help and encourage others and to serve God to the best of our ability.

— *Doris Howell*

### GULFPORT OPEN BIBLE CHURCH 1702-10 - 52nd Street S.

The Gulfport Open Bible Church held its first service at the old Community Center on 28th Avenue S. on July 4, 1965. In 1966, the Open Bible Church moved into three store buildings on Gulfport Blvd., where services were held until 1969. Then a house and land were purchased and a sanctuary was built and dedicated in 1973, at the present location. We minister Jesus Christ to the whole man-spirit, soul and body.

We believe Jesus saves us from sin, provides health to our body. Our Church is the only Pentecostal church serving the people of Gulfport and bringing satellite ministries of well-known ministers and Bible teachers to our city.

Rev. Dillinger was born in Titusville, Pennsylvania, and as a young man moved to Buffalo where he met his future wife. They were married in 1946 and have one daughter. After having a personal experience with Jesus Christ, Rev. Dillinger gave his heart and life to the Lord Who directed him into Bible studies through the Moody Bible Institute. He was directed to St. Petersburg in 1957, moved to Gulfport and started his own television business. He took extension courses from Stetson University and went to Florida Bible Institute for three years, from which he graduated in 1965. He pioneered this church.

— *Rev. Clarence Dillinger*

## GULFPORT PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH 5313 - 27th Avenue S.

Gulfport Presbyterian Church originated as an independent church under the leadership of the Reverend James T. MacLean. Rev. MacLean was a native of Nova Scotia who received his education in the United States, graduating from Princeton University in 1890. After serving churches in Delaware, Pennsylvania, and several locations in Florida, he retired in Gulfport in 1910. On January 27, 1917, the first worship service was conducted by Rev. MacLean in the sanctuary financed by him.

After the death of Rev. MacLean in 1936, the church was without a regular minister for almost ten years. Supply ministers were used until 1947, when Dr. Andrew A. Walker accepted a call to the Gulfport Independent Church. At the first service he conducted, there were seven or eight people present. Dr. Walker built up the church membership to approximately ninety. During his pastorate it was known as "The Friendly Church of Gulfport."

Desiring to unite with one of the major Presbyterian denominations, the congregation voted to petition the St. John's Presbytery of the Presbyterian Church, U.S. for membership. At the April 1948 meeting, the First Presbyterian Church of Gulfport was received as a member of the St. John's Presbytery and of the Presbyterian Church in the United States. Two years later the St. John's Presbytery was divided into two Presbyteries, and the First Presbyterian Church of Gulfport became a member of the newly formed Westminster Presbytery.

As the First Presbyterian Church of Gulfport began to grow, it was necessary to expand the Sunday school facilities. On July 2, 1950, ground was broken for a Sunday school annex, the building that is now our Fellowship Hall. Six years later, more room was needed for the larger crowds attending worship. The Session voted to move the Worship Services to the Sunday School Annex, and to use the old church building for Sunday school space.

In September, 1956, Dr. C. Logan Landrum came to us and again our membership grew. In need of a larger seating capacity, the congregation voted, on November 20, 1957, to add twenty feet to the Sunday School Annex that was being used for Worship Services.

It soon became apparent however that the facilities of the First Presbyterian Church of Gulfport were not adequate to

meet the challenge and opportunity surrounding it. At a congregational meeting on March 15, 1959, a committee was elected to study the long-range plans of our church. As a result of this study, it was decided to build the present sanctuary and educational building.

Many members were responsible for the planning and furnishing of the new Sanctuary. William Safranek, retired railroad executive, Edward Brozka, disabled . American Veteran, Clarence Higgins, Sr., Captain McMillan, Gardner Beckett, attorney-at-law, Mrs. Ida McLaren, and many more too numerous to list were some of the prominent members helping in this planning.

On May 13, 1962, ground was broken for the new facilities. The first service was conducted in the new Sanctuary on January 27, 1963. On August 25, 1966, the name of the church was changed to Gulfport Presbyterian Church.

The church was one of the earliest leaders in the Presbytery to elect women Elders. The first two were Mrs. Marion Edwards in December 1964, and Mrs. George Haas in January 1965. There have been many fine and effective members over the years who have given much to the local church, to the Presbytery, and to the community. To name a few — Elder Clarence Higgins, Sr., known to all as "Mr. Presbyterian," was elected an Emeritus in December 1983; Yvonne Johnson, active church leader and member of the Council of the City of Gulfport; William MacNeal, former Mayor of Gulfport.

In 1978, Elder Edith Haas was honored by being elected President of the Women of Westminster Presbytery.

The organization of the Women of the Church has contributed much in the life of the church over the years. The women still roll bandages and furnish White Cross supplies to overseas mission hospitals. Operation Attack and the Migrants receive handmade clothing for needy children, food supplies, and money to help cover other necessities. The women support the total program of the church in many ways.

In addition to the honored ministries of Christian education and worship, the present congregation also has engaged in several other exciting ministries: a noon meal was served to approximately 125 elderly persons Monday through Friday under the Congregate Dining Program (affiliated with Meals-On-Wheels) for several years. They have now moved into the beautiful new, large Gulfport Multi-Purpose Senior Center. Space has been furnished by the church for



English language classes. A certified, non-graded elementary school, named Sunflower School, providing children with more dynamic models for learning, uses classroom space five days a week, and Aerobic classes are held in Fellowship Hall two night a week year-round.

Our church tries to meet community needs whenever we can.

— *Edith Haas*

### **KINGDOM HALL OF JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES** **1219 - 53rd Street S.**

A Kingdom Hall is the place of worship used by Jehovah's Witnesses for the purpose of meeting together to study the Holy Bible. It is practical in design and the congregation, of between 100 to 150 members, meets here for five meetings a week.

This Kingdom Hall in Gulfport was built in 1960 and the original congregation was quite small; but as the years went by, due to the growth, it was necessary to enlarge the hall twice. At present, two congregations of about 150 each are sharing this one Kingdom Hall, and meetings are held almost every day of the week. All of these meetings are open to the public. No collections are taken. These meetings are beneficial for all.

#### ***The Unique Work of Jehovah's Witnesses Worldwide***

Throughout the world, in over 200 lands, Jehovah's Witnesses are telling the Good News of Jehovah's Kingdom by Jesus Christ. Jesus Himself told His disciples in Acts 1:8 — "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit arrives upon you, and you will be witnesses of me both in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the most distant part of the earth." Jehovah's Witnesses are fulfilling the same commission that Jesus Christ gave His followers in the first century, as noted in Matthew 28:19, 20 — "Go therefore and make disciples of people of all the nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all the things until the conclusion of the system of things."

The local Kingdom Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses is the center of worship where each individual is taught by means of Bible talks and demonstrations. Each Christian has the responsibility of personally telling others about God's King-

dom. Each one endeavors to visit and speak with the people in each home in the community, to give them the marvelous hope of living under God's Kingdom ruled by Jesus Christ. Jesus Himself used the Bible as His authority and always gave credit to His heavenly Father, Jehovah. We do the same by using the Bible and Bible study aids such as the *Watchtower*, *Awake!* and books such as *You Can Live Forever in Paradise on Earth*, to help people learn more about our Creator, Jehovah God and His purpose for mankind.

—David Kester

### MOST HOLY NAME OF JESUS PARISH 5806 - 15th Avenue S.

There being no bridge in 1909, the Jesuit Priests from Sacred Heart Church in Tampa canoed across Tampa Bay to bring the Roman Catholics of this area the consolation of Mass and the Sacraments. The Steinwinder family, of 2865 51st Street S., offered their home as the place of worship.

Roman Catholic churches are territorial. Usually someone scouts the area to pick out a suitable church location. Thus, in 1958, the Diocese of St. Augustine, which at that time encompassed the whole State of Florida, purchased six acres of land between 28th Avenue and 30th Avenue S. on the west side of 58th Street, the north portion of Town Shores.

St. Augustine is the site of the first Catholic Foundation in the United States, where in 1565 Father Francisco Lopez of Spain established the Cathedral Parish of St. Augustine.

In December, 1959, Archbishop Joseph P. Hurley, Bishop of St. Augustine, appointed Father William Weinheimer to begin a parish in Gulfport. Father James Fahey celebrated this new beginning with 425 people at the Retired Coast Guard Center on January 3, 1960.

The very next week, larger accommodations at Disston Junior High School were used; several weeks later, the Roller Skating Rink on 49th Street S. was temporarily leased.

Archbishop Hurley of St. Augustine was carefully naming new churches to call attention to important articles of faith. Thus, on one day he signed construction contracts for eleven churches. Blessed Trinity, Transfiguration, Blessed Sacrament were well-known local churches. Most Holy Name of Jesus was to be among them. However, Father Frank Goodman requested a different plan because of the proximity of the property to salt water. Thus, that delay, on Palm Sunday,

April 14, 1962, found the new Most Holy Name of Jesus Church at its present location, on 15th Avenue S. at 58th Street.

High priority of Catholic Education brought Holy Name School into being even before the church. Three portable buildings and a 7-11 store served the K-8 grade school until February 1965, when the present school was completed.

Religious communities of St. Dominic, Notre Dame, and Mercy have staffed the school and welcome children of every race, color or creed.

The annual parish "Oktoberfest" took on community proportions in 1972, and has provided the happy occasion for friends and former students to gather in the context of "welcome home."

There is a growing Lithuanian Roman Catholic community which calls Holy Name not only "home" but by their patron, St. Casimir. Every Sunday and Holy Day, Lithuanian people from as far as Clearwater and Tampa come to worship in their native language and sing their own hymns.

Charter members — indeed, all members — speak with justifiable pride about their church and school because their contribution to its growth has been of a very personal nature supported by deep spiritual motivation.

I have been pastor for 25 years and believe we all feel this way. "We do not have expensive monuments here, but our real treasure, like the 'pearls of great price,' is in the Most Holy Name of Jesus, who is known, loved, and served here."

— *Father Frank Goodman*





## CHAPTER 6

### THE SCHOOL YEARS

Gulfport, in 1926, was the hub of academic activity with its new elementary school and junior high school. There was great excitement as Gulfport Elementary opened Spanish-styled doors to educators, builders, and townspeople. The structure, with its massive arches and two-storied classrooms and balconies overlooking an atrium, was a new, handsome concept for schools. Visitors crossed a long, arched verandah into the spacious stucco building located on 4.8 acres at 52nd Street S. and 20th Avenue.

The school was planned and built by Eric Clauson at a cost of \$95,000, with classrooms arranged around an auditorium in such a way that a central garden was formed. This atrium served as a natural science center for the children of Gulfport for many years. The 16-room structure served grades 1 through 5 and later 1 through 6 with a capacity for 511 students. The cafeteria and library were added in 1948 with a four-room primary wing in 1954.<sup>1</sup>

The auditorium was constructed in 1924 for \$12,700 as an attachment to a four-room, block, school building which had served as the center of family and community activities since 1910. Shuttered doors between the 3rd and 4th and 7th and 8th grade rooms on the east side folded back creating a larger gathering area for chapel, pledge of allegiance and flag ceremonies, and other school activities, according to Mrs. Irene Roberts Welbourn, an early resident of Gulfport.

"There were eight grades," remembered Mary Lou (Faurot) Gray, who had served as teacher and principal at Gulfport and in the county school system for over thirty years. "In addition to academic classes, homemaking and manual shop were taught." Also, during the war years, victory gardens were tended and were an important part of the school session. It was also recalled that holidays were special, and at Christmastime particularly children would carry picnic lunches and the teachers would walk them over along Bear Creek to collect the colorful Florida holly to use for holiday decorations. "Pageants and school functions were the center of the community and the school kept busy," Mrs. Gray emphasized.

Principals in Gulfport schools include Julia Dieffenwierth (Prop College), 1905-06; F. G. Tranberger, 1912-13; Mrs. Margaret Wilder, 1913-15; Laura Walker, 1915-16; Miss Pel-

ham, 1916-17; Ashley Russ, 1919-20; Cecil R. Phillips, 1922-23; Mrs. Lily Berls, 1923-24; Chas. M. Phillips, 1924-27; Mrs. Sarah Anderson, 1927-29; Mrs. Mary Lou Gray, 1929-53; Stanley Moore, 1953-55, and Theresa Graves, 1955-62+.<sup>2</sup>

In 1912, when Pinellas peninsula became a county, many smaller schools employed only one or two teachers who were trying to teach not only the eight grades of grammar school but also included some high school work as well. By 1915, the County School Board passed a resolution which recognized only four high schools in the county — Tarpon Springs, Clearwater, Largo, and St. Petersburg. It was prescribed that all other schools limit their work to instruction in the grammar area only. The school board further passed a resolution offering to pay the actual transportation of any pupil in the county who lived beyond a convenient distance from the nearest high school.

At this time also (1915), a uniform course of study for all the schools had been worked out. It was necessary that all eighth graders be given an examination and promoted into high school on approval of the County School Board and County Superintendent. Because of the uniform work in all the schools and a uniform system of promotion, Pinellas County was recognized as having more high school pupils in proportion to its enrollment than any county in the state.<sup>3</sup> All high schools were on the accredited list of the Southeastern Association of College and Universities, according to Superintendent Dixie Hollins' report of 1915.

The fall of 1926 was doubly important to Gulfport citizens, with the opening of Gulfport Junior High School located at 1001-51st Street S. It was a fitting companion to the new elementary school. This junior high school was of a more formal Spanish architecture, located on 8.57 acres of land with a capacity for 977 students. It was built at a cost of \$116,300, with the heating system costing an additional \$13,757. The name was changed to Disston Junior High<sup>4</sup> on June 22, 1927.

Charles N. Phillips served as the first principal from 1926 to 1945, and Richard L. Jones served 1945-1953. Then Roy E. Kinnick, 1953-54; Albert T. Craig, 1954-56, and Charles Kelsay, 1956-62.<sup>5</sup> The school served the youth of Gulfport until 1983, when the main building was dismantled and leveled after standing vacant for several years.

In 1953, Boca Ciega High School (first called 58th Street High School) was completed and opened in September of

that year with the recognition of being the first high school built in the county since the building boom of 1926. Prior to 1953, senior high youth of Gulfport were taught at St. Petersburg High School. This new senior high had a student capacity of 2,286 with the auditorium seating 1,200 and classrooms numbering 43. The construction cost was \$1,520,209.<sup>6</sup> The school was designed to take maximum advantage of Florida's climate and natural light with the administration building fronting five classroom wings. It was built on property purchased from Mr. Aymer Vinoy Laughner (member of a wealthy oil family of Pennsylvania) who had large acreage in this area at the time of the boom. He sold the forty acres on which Boca Ciega High is located.<sup>7</sup>

At this point in its existence, Gulfport had complete, modern academic facilities for the citizens of the community, as compared to its first one-room schoolhouse which originated back in 1886, when "Disston City" was still in its infancy.

As previously mentioned, the James Barnett family, who were the first settlers, had arrived in 1867, settling near the Bay area where York Street meets Boca Ciega Bay. At that time there were only about fifty families in all of Pinellas peninsula. Few pioneers came to Pinellas during the period 1840-1880. The first surge of white settlers came in 1842 when the Armed Occupation Act became effective. Provisions of this act were that 160 acres would be given to any head of family, or single man over age 18, who would bear arms and live on the land in a fit habitation for five years and cultivate at least five acres. There were several such claims along Tampa Bay and Clearwater Harbor.<sup>8</sup>

The soil of Pinellas peninsula was conducive to agriculture and fish were plentiful along the sheltered coastal areas. As families moved and settled southward, schools were constructed as needed. Pinellas peninsula was a part of Hillsborough County for many years, and Tampa was headquarters for schools as well as churches, voting, entertainment, food, and other activities.<sup>9</sup>

The first recorded structure for school purposes for Pinellas peninsula was a wooden cabin, the McMullen Log School, built by Captain Jim McMullen in 1853 near his home on Coachman Road, a few miles east of Clearwater. In 1860, the Taylor School was constructed on the Sever place. These early schools were for family children and nearby neighbors. In 1868,<sup>10</sup> the Clearwater Cemetery School (the



only school which was operating after the Civil War) was built. The first Anona School followed in 1874, and again, as families moved to the south, the Mt. Vernon School on Belcher Road was constructed in 1879.<sup>11</sup>

Along with other settlers, Englishmen Ernest and Arthur Norwood arrived in the Gulfport area, in 1886. Unfortunately, shortly thereafter, fire destroyed the Norwood brothers' holdings. Arthur, however, assisted by townspeople, continued his life in Gulfport by working at whatever was available. (He was later to go into merchandising and eventually become Mayor of St. Petersburg.) In 1886, he became a teacher in a one-room wooden structure located near the intersection of Disston Avenue (now 49th Street) and 26th Avenue S. (said to be near the residence of 2644 49th Street S.). This early makeshift building was supported on two sides by six pine logs said to be used as props to support the building after a severe storm. According to Irene Roberts Wellbourn, the siding was board and batten. "The shutters never closed tightly," she remembered. Her mother, Nellie Leonardi, had attended the school.

Disston City School, or "Prop College," was integrated — according to Walter Fuller, author and historian of St. Petersburg and Pinellas County — by the children of Mr. and Mrs. John Donaldson, the only black family on the point of Pinellas at that time. Ed Donaldson, 90 years old at the time of the writing of Mr. Fuller's book, *St. Petersburg and Its People*, remembered attending this small wooden schoolhouse. Mr. Norwood had whitewashed the outside of the school, dug a well and built desks and blackboard. Mrs. Wellbourn, as well as Mrs. Margaret Brooks, remembers the first levels of instruction were graded by first primer, second primer, etc. Mrs. Brooks, granddaughter of Frances Weihman, has the original certificate authorizing her grandmother to teach in the public school system. Mrs. Weihman received a two-year certificate for taking ten examinations and scoring 80-100%. The documents were signed by L. W. Buckholz, Hillsborough Superintendent. Mrs. Weihman was a teacher in Gulfport's first school, "Prop College," and the contract states it was for \$50.00 per month for six months. Clara Slauter, of the James Barnett family, was one of the first pupils of this first school. Disston City School was endearingly remembered by many Pinellas dwellers as their *alma mater*, said Walter Fuller.

In 1954, the Stetson College of Law opened its doors with

an entering class of 50 and a total student body of 100. Stetson University of DeLand, Florida, had accepted an offer to locate its law school on the site of a hotel situated on 12 acres of land in the community of Gulfport — with \$100,000 for remodeling and building. Harold (Tom) Sebring, in September of 1955, became Dean of the College of Law. He had resigned his position as Chief Justice of the Florida Supreme Court in order to take up his teaching position. Dean Sebring was well-known as one of the judges in the Nazi war crimes trials in Nuremberg, Germany, at the end of World War II. Richard T. Dillon succeeded as Dean of the College of Law upon the death of Dean Sebring in 1968. The college embarked on a lawyer training program patterned after the historic Inns-of-Court judicial system under which training for the Bar had been centered in England for more than seven centuries. The college is approved by the American Bar Association and has been a member of the Association of American Law Schools since 1931. The school now has an 18-acre campus.

The Rolyat Hotel (Stetson Law School) was built during 1925, Paul Reed of Miami, architect. It was to be a duplicate of a Spanish feudal castle or monastery of the middle ages. Towers, turrets and gates, massive arches and grilled windows surrounded a great patio with palms and fountains. Special features were two great towers — one with a circular room 30-feet in diameter at the top of the tower, and the other, a 110-foot, octagonal main tower — a replica of the golden *Torre Del Oro* tower of Seville, Spain. The dining room or Great Hall was similar to a Spanish cathedral. This hotel was acclaimed “a fragment of Old Spain transplanted into this tropical setting,” and one of the most beautiful in the South. The President of Pasadena Estates, Jack Taylor, gave his name, reversed, to the structure: “Rolyat.”

In 1928, as a result of the “bust,” the Rolyat Hotel and golf course went to the construction company in payment of debts. The John Wanamaker Company (decorators) took back expensive items and sold the rest to a New York stock-broker who had bought the hotel.

In 1929, the Florida Military Academy purchased the hotel and took it over in 1932 and ran it until 1951, when once again it stood empty until purchased by Stetson University.

— Genevieve Smith

## CREDITS

<sup>1</sup> *The Golden Anniversary of Pinellas Schools*, Board of Public Education, Pinellas County Public Schools, p. 53.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> County School Superintendent Dixie Hollins' Report of 1915, obtained from Tampa Public Library.

<sup>4</sup> Community Facilities Plan for Pinellas County — Pinellas Planning Council, March 1971, p. 116.

<sup>5</sup> *The Golden Anniversary of Pinellas Schools*, Board of Public Education, Pinellas County Public Schools, p. 52.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 61.

<sup>7</sup> *This Was Florida's Boom*, by Walter Fuller.

<sup>8</sup> Historical Background of Pinellas County, Florida, prepared by Pinellas County Department of Planning, County Courthouse, Clearwater, Florida, January 1968.

<sup>9</sup> *Bethel's History of Point Pinellas*, by John A. Bethel, Great Outdoors Publishing Co., St. Petersburg, Florida, 1962, p. 88.

<sup>10</sup> *The Golden Anniversary of Pinellas Schools*, Board of Public Education, Pinellas County Public Schools. Clearwater - St. Petersburg, Florida - 1912-1962.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

## CHAPTER 8

## GOVERNMENT SERVICES &amp; BUSINESS

## AS BUSINESS GREW

The earliest settlers in this area did as their counterparts all up the eastern seaboard did — they made do with what they had! An abundance of fish, land, and for the most part an ideal climate, determined their activities. Barter — a fish for a haircut — rather than commerce was the rule and subsistence their goal. Gradually, however, a couple of cows became a herd, a few chickens a poultry farm, half a dozen citrus trees a grove, and the "catch for the day" counted in the thousands. Agriculture and fishing became Big Business here.

Alex Leonardy developed an exceptionally good variety of grapefruit, now named for him, and wild bananas grew all over the place. According to *The Seabreeze*, Mr. Puig had the finest arbor of grapes, but Mrs. Barnett took the lead on melons, while Captain Miranda excelled with pecans. Guavas grew everywhere — some so sour "they would make a pig squeal." The freeze of 1890 was a severe blow to citrus



growers, but they were undaunted and soon were producing at former levels. As one enthusiastic advertisement in some northern papers put it at the time — “everything grows in Florida”!

Later there were banana groves (Nathan McKinney had one at 2723 56th Street S.) and the orange became the trademark of Florida and its symbol everywhere. Flowers and shrubs were cultivated early and when transportation became appropriate, they were shipped to many parts of the country. Ornamental plant nurseries have flourished in these parts, including the Garden Path Nursery, Josten's, Fredericksons' Pine Tree Nursery, and Ingrahams' Nursery.

The Med fly caused excessive damage, especially in 1930 when the City Council issued a call for help from all residents in cleaning up the debris. Citrus canker has been a scourge at various times including the present when entire groves have had to be destroyed to prevent the spread of this most dreaded disease of the citrus.

## *FISHING*

The major activity was, of course, on the waterfront. Fishing was always the main industry and rapidly grew from supplying the needs of early settlers to commercial enterprises by 1843. At first, most of the fish were sold to Harry Bell's restaurant. Later George Meares and Percy Neeld bought him out and advertised they would supply the entire county with fish. Edward Torres and Charles MacPherson were more modest, saying only that they had purchased a gill net and intended to supply Disston City with fish. Well-known fishermen through the years included Joe Bethell, Nathan McKinney, Jessie Gleaton, Worfford, Gadsden, Renney, and Arthur Mann. Many remembered the names of fish house owners and operators, including the Ellsworth Fish Co., Dewey Taylor, Simon Bell, Clarence Bromley, the Mann Brothers, the Aylesworth Brothers, and the Osgood Brothers.

Emory Campbell bought the fish house on the pier in 1957 and was there until the pier had to be demolished in 1980 because of unsafe structure weakened by years of weathering and usage. As we go to press, the State of Florida has finally granted permission to proceed to rebuild our pier with monies already partly collected from a special tax levied by referendum for three years.

Net-making and repairing was assuredly a related business, and Emma Pollard is the most frequently acclaimed expert

in this skilled art. Recently, at Nostalgia Day, we enjoyed an exhibit of this complicated process, performed by Nathan White's cousin, Ollie White, and Sherman Bliss.

Nathan told us that mullet season opened January 15, and in their first haul they would bring in 30,000 to 50,000 pounds of fish for which they charged five cents a pound the first day, three cents the second day, and one cent the third; then that was it! They'd get 500 to 700 pounds of grouper by 5:00 p.m. most any day, throw them up on the dock, and the tourists would watch while they cleaned them. Some paid five cents for the cleaning, others paid nothing. When the men finished, they then cleaned the dock and their boat, and the gas truck would come at six o'clock to fill the tanks. After supper they'd fish for shiners (northerners call them "pin fish") for next day's bait. They'd fish till sundown, then they'd be up next day at sunup, or earlier, to start out again. They had boiled fish for breakfast, fried fish for dinner, and fish cakes for supper — everybody had the same!

Fishermen had to spread their nets for cleaning, drying and mending, and they hung them on pilings near the pier until the City requested them to move that operation to Clam Bayou. It was all mangrove and shallow water except for a little canal — what is now the east side of our present Marina; then it was sort of an auxiliary dump for the City. Matt Brooks was in charge of dredging that canal out so their boats could come in — a horrid job because of sand fleas and mosquitoes which ate one alive. Smudge from burning out the area smoked up most of the houses anywhere near the waterfront. It took several years for it to wash off!

Tarpon was the tourists' favorite game fish; Guy Irving, Captain Walt Williams, and others took them on day cruises. "Shorty" Welch, Joe Artell, and Nathan's crowd went mostly for mullet and grouper.

With fishing a major industry, boat-builders were numerous and active. In 1910, a naval architect, Cliff Hadley, formed a company with his son at 5018 31st Avenue S. and one source said he became famous in 1935 because he built several models of hydroplanes that won world records. Courtney Sawyer built his boats under an oak tree on the northwest corner of 52nd Street and 29th Avenue S. and used old Studebaker engines in them. The Mann Brothers made their boats by hand and their boats were considered the best. Earlier builders in 1870 included Joe Bartel, B. C. Williams, Taylor Slaughter, Jack White, John Sheppard, Perry

Davis, Harry Yonger, and the Osgood Brothers. When the Osgoods' place burned down in 1956, Council enlisted people who helped raise money for its rebuilding — perhaps because it was considered big business since they employed about fifty people. The Osgoods remained in business until 1977.

The Aylesworth Brothers, who began selling fish wholesale in 1950, also built boats; but they moved their business into St. Petersburg in 1955.

In the late 1800's, Miranda's Wharf at the foot of York Street was a boon, not only to fishermen but to farmers, fruit growers and retail stores for shipping and receiving produce.

A variety of schooners plied all our surrounding waters — to Tampa, Clearwater, and Tarpon Springs for mail deliveries, supplies, and for passengers — and others went as far as Biloxi and Key West. The hurricane of 1921 destroyed piers, fish houses, boats and nets, but they were soon replaced and "business as usual" was the motto of the day for everyone.

The chartering of boats for fishing or for pleasure resumed in about 1944. About then, six or eight of such craft were owned by Bill Robson, J. Auble, and others and, of course, we know many such boats are used today for similar purposes. In fact, from 1955 the numbers have steadily increased, until now it is estimated that there are about 70,000 boats licensed in Pinellas County! Thompson C. Roberts told Helen Ross (4/18/83) that his cousins, the MacRoberts, had several boats which they ran from our pier to Pass-A-Grille especially catering to the tourist trade. People rode the trolley from St. Petersburg to its terminal on our pier where they could board any number of boats — sometimes for deep-sea fishing or just for crossing to another beach for special dining or picnicking, or whatever! He also said that his father caught alligators for that kind of farm and that one — known as "Big Bob" — once knocked his father flat on his face with his huge tail. They sold alligators either for the meat or skins — a profitable business in those days!

### **CATTLE-RAISING**

Next to fishing in importance came cattle-catching and raising for much of the land was open range, the small homesteader having to fence in his property for protection. In the 1800's, Abel Miranda was the leading cattleman. Later the Lykes Brothers (yes, the same company we buy meat from



today!) had extensive local holdings, but in 1910 the new Town Council asked them to remove cattle to make way for house-building for the influx of new residents from the north. The cattle were then driven east around Clam Bayou and south to Maximo Point, but in a few years they had to be moved north to the end of the present Pinellas County line. Today they are range sites. Some of the cowboys then wore six-shooters for use on snakes or in other emergency. Milk could be had for the taking *if* you wanted to try your hands on wild cows! During round-ups, the cattle were held in barbed wire enclosures for several days, and later those areas made super gardens with its well-fertilized soil!

As the herds grew, so did the dairies. Records show that we had Baker's dairy on 52nd Street, Brown's on the corner of 49th and Tangerine, Pippins' and Schuldecker's both on 49th. Pippins supplied milk for the school and Schuldecker had a dipping vat for cattle walking to rid them of ticks. Hank Whitbeck had a one-man operation on 49th between 25th and 26th Avenues. During the Depression, one of his customers stopped her order because she couldn't pay the bills. He told Mrs. White that "as long as you've got kids and I've got cows, you'll get milk." And he kept her supplied whether she could pay or not!

### MAIN STREETS AND STORES

If you really want to know about early stores when we were Bonifacio or Disston City, let us suggest that you review the Museum's copy of *The Seabreeze*, published April 1886 for one year — or better yet, *buy one*. The ads running most of that year were for Baumeister's "Drygoods, Shoes, & Notions — Tools, Tinware, Crockery & Glassware"; for Anderson and Hamilton, "Butchers Market Every Saturday" and The Cash Store, R. L. Locke, Prop'r, with a "complete stock of staple goods, groceries, etc. of a superior quality, always on hand, also fine cigars and tobacco of various brands and prices" listing Disston City as their location. Many stores in Tampa sought customers; and when you read the "All Around the Point," the "Disston City Doings" columns and some editorials, you will find individuals also looking for buyers of their homegrown or homemade items.

Our original main streets were 51st and York Street from 29th Avenue S. to the Bay. The coming of the trolley cars in 1904 changed that because it ran down Beach Blvd. and quickly commercial activities moved to that vicinity. As described elsewhere in this book, Shore Blvd. was the focal

point for numbering streets — proceeding from 1st north from the Bay. The trolley meant much to this growing community for it made possible the shipping of fish from St. Petersburg on north-bound trains since refrigeration cars were now available.

Sawmills became necessary to accommodate the building business. King and Singlehurst were early ones and Florida builders had their own siding at 43rd Street and 7th Avenue when they were doing their innovative house construction in the 1950's.

Nathan and others told us about early stores. There was a little sort of house on the hexagonal end of the old pier where they sold candy, gum, ice, soda, and liquor. "Flo" Bamberg operated a small filling station at the east end of the block (Shore Blvd.) and she sold bubble gum, root beer and other necessities! There was an outside patio tavern maybe called The Shady Nook where Walt's Trophy Room later preceded Gulfport on the Rocks. R. W. Caldwell and "Bud" Markham built on the east corner of Shore Blvd. and 55th Street Nathan's mother opened a little restaurant to sell baked goods and sandwiches. She thought that with help from his two sisters and Nathan she could make a living. That was when WPA was building the pier and the workmen came for breakfast every day. By midweek they would say, "Ethel, we'll pay you Saturday," but they never said *which* Saturday! She went broke and had to sell out. Then she fixed up a place at Essex and 55th called White's Coffee Shop. When Jo Kane swapped his office for that small house (then used as a library), now Rehearsal Hall, she moved to DeLett and 55th.

Walter Brooks told us his grandparents built what is now known as Holiday Inn Apartments, and they lived upstairs and had the Post Office and a grocery store downstairs. There were ten-foot porches around the house but since they have been enclosed upstairs. His grandfather bought Army surplus foods by the carload — dried vegetables and fruits and such. He leased part of the property to Hagner, a barber, and another area to Virginia Welch for her beauty shop. Ira Odum had a real estate office there at one time and much later, in 1935 or so, Douberay had a liquor store (he's thankful Grandpa didn't know about that!). Isabel Cronkite had a grocery store there once, too. That property has been a rental since 1925. Next to it the Prigun Apartments was once a grocery store, and later Bill and Frank Moulton had a button

and toy factory there. Now it is being restored as a historic site and will continue as an apartment building.

It is reported that in 1920 Clauson's Grocery Store at 28th Avenue and 52nd Street was the first in that area. Later they moved to the new shopping center on 30th Avenue and finally became an IGA store.

In the late 1930's, the real estate boom hit here as elsewhere in Florida, when many had tasted the joys of life here and/or wanted a winter home and/or wanted to make money! Markham and Caldwell were two popular realtors, as described elsewhere. Old ads include those by Joseph Torres, General Insurance Agent; the General Business Agency of E. B. McPherson & Son who handled all kinds of legal documents and job printing (and *The Seabreeze* for one year). W. B. Miranda was the Agent for the Hamilton Disston Land Companies.

Phebe Arms (young at 95) has fond memories of Gulfport in 1945 when she and her husband moved here from New York. It was a quiet place then — she walked her black retriever along the beach every night and would never meet anyone or ever be afraid. She opened a fruit stand next to the Markham Building, and when the trolleys came down Beach Blvd., the conductors would buy juice from her, teasing her about it being canned! They knew she hand-squeezed it every morning. She wrote to California to order fruit for some time, then bought it from Joe Perry. She also sold ice cream, candy, cigarettes and other items, especially to those who came for the Sunday afternoon concerts on the beach. She grew figs in her back yard and sold them to Ingram's Grocery for thirty-five cents a little basket. Juice cost ten cents and people sat on the benches to enjoy the breeze, conversation and their cool drinks. Phebe remembers how pretty the Boulevard was then — the Garden and Bird Club had planted flowers all along the trolley tracks from 28th Avenue to the water. She said an Indian Chief, Silver Tongue, came to sing, but no one seems to know where he lived. Mel Ogden started the popular song fests and kept them going for five years. Now others do it.

Phebe remembers there was a shoemaker named D'Amato near the drug store and that everyone got what they wanted at Ingram's. The good restaurant was Bell's down at Shore corner, where just super dinners cost only one dollar, even on Sundays. Phebe's first home here was at Clinton and 29th Street, which they bought from Mrs. Kipp, the Mayor's wife;



but she moved to be with her daughter when her husband died.

In October 1983, Mrs. Althea Murphy recalled for us how she met her husband and how they bought a local drug store. The senior Murphys came to St. Petersburg in 1922 and Merton was supposed to become a priest, but he preferred to be an artist and photographer. However, when the Depression hit, he worked for his father in McKinnon's Drug Store on Central Avenue. Althea was on vacation with her family, met him at a party, and they fell in love and stayed that way! When it became possible, they decided to buy their own store, so talked with salesmen about availability of such property. That's how they discovered the Gulfport one was for sale. In 1948 they bought from W. P. Tripp, and became very proud of Gulfport Sundries, as they named their new possession. Many residents have told us about spending time there, working full or part-time there, eating their great sandwiches, elegant sundaes and frappes, or just socializing. Phebe Arms just glowed when she told us about eating a chocolate sundae on Pearl Harbor Sunday when the news came over the radio in the drug store.

"Mert" became ill in 1957 and died the next year. Althea tried to run the business, and though it was hard, she really enjoyed being with people and their interests became hers in many instances. When they had bought, the mural painted by Mr. Gray was on the southern wall of the building — recognized as a landmark for many years. People came great distances to have family pictures taken below it — regrettably it is now covered. We are fortunate to have two of the Gray murals in our Museum. The Murphys were active in the Lions and its Auxiliary. Gulfport Sundries was sold to Bill Shaw in 1958 and he enjoyed working in the happy atmosphere he had inherited. He says there was a huge ceiling fan which seemed to keep people cool — without any air conditioners such as we now consider essential. He reminded us that there was a great store and that Alma and Casey Ingram had many customers. He was the best butcher — would get and prepare any cut you'd ask for. Zimmerman had a laundromat next door. Bill said that the owners of the building redid the outside while he was there and that's when the Gray mural disappeared. Bill moved to 49th Street about four years later and named his new place The Gulfport Apothecary to distinguish it from Shaw's Pharmacy which he had named the Murphy location.

named the Murphy location.

The First Bank of Gulfport was chartered in 1950 — later bought by the Royal Trust Bank of Canada and recently has become a branch of Florida National — our bank on the corner of 58th Street and 22nd Avenue which, like our City, has now had three names!

In 1954 or so, Marion (McCullough) Evans opened The Witchcraft Gift Shop on Beach Blvd. for Mrs. Camp — initiating a nine-year relationship. A simple drive or walk around present-day Gulfport will demonstrate to you the tremendous growth in business in Gulfport.

— Agnes Conron, Frances Purdy

## CITY COUNCIL AND MANAGEMENT

### NOTICE

“All persons who are registered voters residing within the following limits, to wit, beginning at the northeast corner of section twenty seven (27), township thirty one (31), south range sixteen (16) east, thence running directly south to the south section line of section thirty four (34) township thirty one (31) south range sixteen (16) east, thence due west along said section line to the shore of Boca Ciega Bay, thence in a north westerly direction meandering said shore to the north line of section thirty (30) township thirty one (31) south, range sixteen (16) east and thence due east on the section lines to the place of beginning, are hereby requested to assemble at the hour of seven o'clock P.M. on Wednesday the 12th day of October, A.D. 1910 at the Casino on the dock of the Electric Railroad Company, on Boca Ciega Bay, aforesaid under the provisions of Title X Chapter of the Revised Statutes of the State of Florida of the year 1906, to elect officers and organize a municipal government.

Dated this 30th day of August, 1910

A. A. Hoyt  
E. E. Wintersgill  
William P. Woodworth  
Charles E. Willetts  
J. R. Girard  
H. Chester Sawyer  
Thomas Ausson  
James Barnett  
J. C. White  
Alex F. Leonardy  
E. H. Weathers

J. White  
H. E. Mitchell  
S. J. Webb  
W. B. Livingstone  
William Renney  
Walter Roberts  
B. F. White  
F. G. Gleaton  
R. Lee Allen  
H. A. Leonardy  
J. F. Daniels

Daniel Hoover  
C. E. Purrington  
J. M. Nash  
C. W. Thomes  
H. B. McRoberts  
J. B. Steinwinder  
S. P. Renney  
L. M. Wintersgill  
A. C. Stefanski  
Wm. Blackshear  
M. McRoberts”

The next document of interest is addressed to the State of Florida, County of Hillsborough:

"In person appeared before the undersigned, Lew B. Brown who being duly sworn deposes and says: That he is Publisher of the St. Petersburg Independent, a newspaper published in the said County and that the notice, a copy of which is hereto attached, was published in said paper for the space of thirty days to wit, in the issues of September 10th, 17th and 24th and October 1st, 1910.

Lew B. Brown

Sworn to and subscribed before me this 11th day of October 1910.

B. J. Farmer

Notary Public, State of Florida

My commission expires October 16, 1910."

Then we have the Minutes of the meeting, which reads as follows:

"At a meeting called by advertising for thirty days in the St. Petersburg Independent and held on Wednesday, the 12th day of October A.D. 1910 at the Gulf Casino on Boca Ciega Bay, for the purpose of selecting officers and organizing a municipal government. Upon the roll call thirty (30) registered voters residing within the territory advertised to be incorporated answered to their names, there being thirty eight (38) registered voters in the district proposed to be incorporated. The roll call showed that the required two thirds of all registered voters in the district were present. Mr. A. A. Hoyt was elected Chairman and Wm. P. Woodworth, Secretary. . . . A vote was taken by written ballot which resulted in a decision to incorporate, twenty three (23) votes being cast in favor of incorporation and seven (7) against incorporation. Upon a resolution being submitted that the name of "GULFPORT" be adopted for the incorporated territory it was unanimously carried. Mr. Hoyt presented a drawing for a seal showing vessels at anchor in the port and the words "Gulfport, Florida" on the circle. Upon the name being submitted to a vote, the seal was unanimously adopted. An impression of said seal is hereon made."

There was some discussion of and final agreement on the boundaries of the new town and then the item of election of officers was introduced by the Chairman. . . . "Wm. P. Woodworth, Elmer E. Wintersgill and Alonzo A. Hoyt



were nominated as candidates for Mayor. Mr. Woodworth refused to be a candidate for any office whatever and Mr. Elmer E. Wintersgill was elected by a vote of twenty one (21) against seven (7) for Mr. Hoyt. On motion of Mr. Hoyt duly recorded, the election was made unanimous. Mr. A. L. Stefanski, Mr. Elmer E. Wintersgill, Mr. Joshua White, Mr. Henry Slaughter and Mr. Henry Weathers were nominated for the office of aldermen and there being no other candidates, they were declared elected. Mr. Samuel J. Webb was nominated for Clerk and there being no other candidates he was duly elected. Mr. John C. White was nominated for Marshal and there being no other candidates he was declared duly elected. The meeting was then brought to a close."

On the 14th of October, the *St. Petersburg Times* acclaimed "Veteran City Is Dead! Long Live Gulfport — the largest town in the State can now be claimed for Pinellas — 'Gulfport' born and christened — Pinellas Peninsula's latest and largest town has immense territory and 38 citizens."

We are unable to offer information about how this organization actually functioned, except that we understand each alderman had an assignment for supervision of a segment of the town's functions. We can quote newspaper comments on Gulfport's growth — for example, by 1920 the unofficial population was reported to be 300. Ten years later it had become 851, and in 1940 it had 1,580 residents. By 1950 it was reporting 3,701 residents. The town operated under Mayor-Council or Commission form of government until 1954 when the new Charter provided for Council-Management government and the title of City. (See organizational chart on page 82, provided us by Helen Perrault.)

During the 1950's the population tripled and on October 2, 1956, the *Times* reported "Gulfport Boasts 10,000 Residents," showing pictures of a regatta underway as part of Gulfport's boat show. Also shown is a "nautical caper with Frances Smith in "Miss Gulfport" and "Got It — Now What?" — two skin divers got a huge fish but needed a boat hoists to bring it in! The article goes on to say this is the third largest municipality in Pinellas County, which, until 1911, was just the western end of Hillsborough County.

"Streamlined Today" — 1956-57, municipal budget was more than \$463,000 and Council was considering three million dollars' worth of improvements! The reader was reminded that in 1913 election of officials cut their "con-

stituency by 20%” and that those officials felt \$266 was a pretty steep bid for erection of a town lockup and the item was shelved temporarily. A year later, our pictures of the beach show it to be solidly packed with children and adults — the latter planning to also enjoy dancing in the Casino while the youngsters would be under the watchful eyes of lifeguards.

Recognition that very little unimproved land was left within City boundaries meant expansion would have to be UP — so installation of a completely modern sewerage system was undertaken to permit construction of hotels, apartment houses, and other multi-family dwellings. The promise of a quiet life in a small city with a grand waterfront had struck many residents and that promise continues to attract, doesn't it? Then the prediction was that we would have 30,000 residents, but so far it has been maintaining at about 13,000.



Mary Campbell provided us with the listing of Mayors, City Clerks and Managers which may interest you.

#### MAYORS

Samuel J. Webb . . . . .	Nov. 1930 - Oct. 1931 (died in office)
Henry J. Kipp . . . . .	Nov. 1931 - Nov. 1932
Clifford S. Hadley . . . . .	Nov. 1932 - Nov. 1934
Andrew E. Potter . . . . .	Nov. 1934 - June 1936
John W. Booth . . . . .	June 1936 - Nov. 1936 (Acting)
H. G. Ham . . . . .	Nov. 1936 - Nov. 1937
Clyde A. Foster . . . . .	Nov. 1937 - Nov. 1940
Andrew W. Gibson . . . . .	Nov. 1940 - Sept. 1944 (died in office)
Frank Wheeler . . . . .	Sept. 1944 - Nov. 1944 (Acting)
	Nov. 1944 - Nov. 1946
Walter Williams . . . . .	Feb. 1946 - Nov. 1946 (Acting)
	Nov. 1946 - Nov. 1948
Clifford S. Hadley . . . . .	Nov. 1948 - Nov. 1950
Walter Williams . . . . .	Nov. 1950 - Nov. 1951
Avery Gilkerson . . . . .	Nov. 1951 - Nov. 1952
Harold Fox . . . . .	Nov. 1952 - May 1955
A. L. Anderson . . . . .	May 1955 - Nov. 1958
John T. Robinson . . . . .	Nov. 1958 - Nov. 1960
William MacNeill . . . . .	Nov. 1960 - Nov. 1964
John T. Robinson . . . . .	Nov. 1964 - March 1967
William G. Jopson . . . . .	Mar. 1967 - Mar. 1969
E. S. "Bud" Markham . . . . .	Mar. 1969 - Mar. 1971
William MacNeill . . . . .	Mar. 1971 - Jan. 1973
Jay P. Clymer . . . . .	Jan. 1973 - Mar. 1985
Yvonne Johnson . . . . .	Mar. 1985 - present

**CITY CLERKS**

H. Simpson . . . . .	May 1930 - Jan. 1931
Walter S. Brooks . . . . .	Jan. 1931 - Oct. 1933
Aida M. Browne . . . . .	Oct. 1933 - Nov. 1933
John Holsapple . . . . .	Nov. 1933 - Sept. 1961
Ellen Bauer . . . . .	Sept. 1961 - Sept. 1965
Bernice R. Perry . . . . .	Sept. 1965 - July 1981
B. J. Couch . . . . .	July 1981 - Jan. 1984
Bruce T. Haddock . . . . .	Jan. 1984 - June 1984 (Acting)
Lesley D. Madison . . . . .	June 1984 - present

**CITY MANAGERS**

Aaron Marsh . . . . .	Jan. 1955 - Nov. 1956
John Holsapple . . . . .	Nov. 1956 - Mar. 1957 (Acting)
C. Joseph Babineau . . . . .	Mar. 1957 - Feb. 1961
John Holsapple . . . . .	Feb. 1961 - June 1961 (Acting)
George Adkins . . . . .	July 1961 - Aug. 1963
Nicholas Meiszer . . . . .	Aug. 1963 - June 1966
Tom Lovern . . . . .	June 1966 - Oct. 1966 (Acting)
Charles R. Davis . . . . .	Oct. 1966 - Jan. 1970
Tom Lovern . . . . .	Jan. 1970 - June 1970 (Acting)
John J. Oross . . . . .	June 1970 - Feb. 1972
Bernice R. Perry . . . . .	Feb. 1972 - Jan. 1973 (Acting)
Anton H. Harwig . . . . .	Jan. 1973 - Mar. 1974
L. T. McCarthy . . . . .	Mar. 1974 - Aug. 1974 (Acting)
Harry G. Perkins . . . . .	Aug. 1974 - Sept. 1977
L. T. McCarthy . . . . .	Sept. 1977 - Dec. 1977 (Acting)
Ellis Shapiro . . . . .	Dec. 1977 - Dec. 1984
Bruce Haddock . . . . .	Jan. 1985 - present

To complete this section on government we felt it fitting to honor two Councilmen-Mayors who have been, and are, deeply revered by many. These vignettes were prepared by Catherine A. Hickman from materials shared by the former's sons Walt and Bert Williams and from the autobiography written by Jay P. Clymer. Sources of both are to be filed in our Museum along with all other available and original documentation of this book.

**UNCLE WALT**

Captain Walter Williams, affectionately known to all as "Uncle Walt," came to Gulfport in 1904 when it was called Disston City.

He was born in Charlotte, North Carolina. He ran away from home at age 15 and worked in Alabama, Tennessee, and Georgia at odd jobs. Within a few months he landed in Apalachicola, Florida, and had his first regular job, working at a





CAPT. WALTER WILLIAMS  
"Uncle Walt"

logging camp. He helped bring a load of lumber down on a schooner which was unloaded at Maximo Point. There he ran into a group of fishermen. Saltwater fishing appealed to him, and he immediately gave up the lumber business and started fishing with Captain Josh White.

For fifty years, Uncle Walt was an integral part of the town which he saw grow from a tiny fishing village to a thriving city.

Three times Mayor of Gulfport, Captain Williams was an active and colorful force in the town's progress. He first became widely known as Captain of the *Don*, a pleasure and fishing boat.

On November 15, 1954, Captain Walter Williams was made Honorary Councilman for life by Proclamation. The whole city turned out to help "Mr. Gulfport" and his bride (Inez Green) of fifty years when they celebrated June 11, 1955. They were cited as examples of true pioneer stock which has been the backbone of our nation. He accomplished much for Gulfport, but his greatest success was in making a friend of everyone he met.

#### JAY P. CLYMER — "The Man"

Jay was born in Altoona, Pennsylvania, on August 11, 1896, was brought up in Lebanon in that state and graduated from Lebanon High School in 1913. After graduation he worked for over a year in the engineering department of the Lebanon plant of Bethlehem Steel Company to accumulate enough money to enter Lehigh University, which he did in



JAY P. CLYMER  
"The Man"

1914. He graduated from university in 1918 with a degree of Mechanical Engineer. In order to remain at Lehigh he had many jobs — he waited tables at the "Commons," tended fires during the winters at the University Club, gathered laundry at the dormitories and worked every Easter and Christmas holidays as well as during summer vacations at Bethlehem Steel.

With his degree in hand, he accepted an appointment in the U.S. Navy as an Ensign and was assigned to the U.S.S. *Oklahoma*, one of the largest super dreadnaughts in the Navy at that time. In June, 1918, the ship was assigned to service in foreign waters — Bounty Bay, Ireland, the peacetime base for the British Royal Navy. Jay was promoted to Lieutenant J.G. and acted as Assistant Engineer.

When the war ended, he returned home, married Naomi Arnold, and moved to New York City where they lived until June, 1919. During that time they attended many shows on Broadway with such famous actors as Eddie Cantor, Al Jolson, Nora Bayes and others. He resigned from the Navy in June, 1919.

The Clymers then returned to Lebanon and he became a supervisor of a number of Design Engineers of the Bethlehem Steel Company. He remained there until 1921 when he accepted a position as general manager of the Down Tool works in Fleetwood, Pennsylvania. In 1936 he was appointed Senior Project Engineer with the Armstrong Cork Company in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. He was with them until 1956 when he retired at age 60.

Unwilling to remain "retired," Jay worked for five years for Wilner Wood Products in Norway, Maine. Frequently

during vacation times he and Naomi would visit his parents who lived in Gulfport, at 2514 Beach Blvd. During their 1950 visit they purchased several lots on 23rd Avenue S. After retirement, Jay was able and ready to become architect, general contractor and builder of the home he continues to live in. He has made cupboards and furniture for this home and can no longer find space for any other of his beautiful pieces.

Jay has also maintained his garden where he had fifteen citrus trees which bear excellent fruit — often shared with his many friends. Flowering plants and shrubs make the front yard a delight most of the year. He believes in keeping busy and having hobbies. One of his favorite pastimes is making pipes of Algerian briar with plexiglas stems.

This grand man became interested in Gulfport politics in 1963 when the City had a project involving a storm sewer line. Having been an engineer all his life, he felt he had knowledge that could be useful to the City. He ran for office and served as Councilman for ten years, after which he was elected Mayor and served more than ten more years — never being defeated in elections. During his terms of office, many important improvements were made for the benefit of residents of Gulfport. He retired January 1985 with the title Mayor Emeritus.

Naomi, his beloved wife, passed away in 1983. She contributed much to our City also, especially by using her musical talents whenever, wherever asked to do so — in nursing homes and at organizational meetings. She said she learned how to play by the hour without any music at silent movies when she was young. She will never be forgotten! The Clymers have three children, nine grandchildren and six great-grandchildren.

The worth of a man is in his list of accomplishments. We salute Jay P. Clymer, "The Man."

— Agnes Conron,  
Catherine Hickman,  
Frances Purdy

## CITY SERVICES

### *FUEL, GAS*

Actually, such gas service as is available in Gulfport is furnished by a private utility company. However, its distribution lines are under the streets and alleys, along with City



water and sewer lines, and available records are in the office of Mr. L. T. McCarthy, City Superintendent. For these reasons, it is included with City Services.

In 1913, the City of St. Petersburg built a plant to manufacture gas from coke or coal, and ran distribution lines throughout the then populated areas of the City. The gas was turned on December 1, 1913. Over the years, the plant was enlarged several times as the population of St. Petersburg grew and extensions of the distribution system required (Grismer, 1924, page 153). (That gas plant eventually occupied most of the area between 10th and 16th Streets and between 2nd and 5th Avenues South — the "Gas Plant Area" where construction of a multi-purpose enclosed sports arena has been recently proposed.)

In the boom days of the early 1920's, many subdivisions were planned and some actually developed along Central Avenue. A gas main was run out Central Avenue all the way to Park Street to serve these subdivisions. A branch main was run south along 49th Street to a point south of Gulfport Blvd. The first known service from that main was run west under 10th Avenue in March, 1927, to provide gas service to Disston Junior High School. About this same time, other branches were run for a few blocks under several of Gulfport's streets which intersected 49th Street.

In 1924, another branch main was run south from Central Avenue under 62nd Street to serve the Rolyat Hotel, then under construction. Branches from this main served all of the Pasadena Estates development between 61st and 64th Streets. All (or at least most) of the homes built in Pasadena Estates during the 1924 to 1926 boom period has gas installed for cooking, water heating, and some has gas space heating.

(Almost none of the homes built in that area since the start of more recent development, about 1945, have had gas installed, although all have gas mains within easy reach. And, as many of those 1925 period homes have been modernized, the gas has been removed.)

In 1950, a tap from the 62nd Street main was run to Boca Ceiga High School for cafeteria cooking and water heating.

Then, in May 1960, the City of St. Petersburg ran a new main under Lakeview Avenue and Gulfport Blvd. to serve the developing Pasadena Golf Course Estates area. This made gas service available to Gulfport residents within a few blocks of Gulfport Blvd.

In the early 1960's, Florida Gas Transmission Company

brought natural gas into the area via pipeline from Texas and Louisiana. The City of St. Petersburg shut down its gas manufacturing plant and sold the distribution system to Florida Gas Transmission Company.

(Natural gas has a heating value — btu's per cubic foot — of over ten times that of manufactured gas. Conversion of the distribution system was a month-long operation requiring the shutting down of the entire system, and the services of dozens of gas technicians brought in by Florida Natural Gas from other parts of its system. Every individual gas-using appliance had to be shut off and have its burner orifice changed. Then, after the natural gas was available in the mains, each of those appliances had to be turned back on and tested.)

The final addition to gas service in Gulfport occurred in 1969 when a branch of the 49th Street main was run west for several blocks under 9th Avenue to serve some industries in that area, and possibly the Beachway Mobile Home Park.

In summary, natural gas service is available in a few areas of Gulfport, but it appears that not many homes have this service installed.

## *GARBAGE / TRASH COLLECTION AND DISPOSAL* (Historic)

The taped memoirs of some of our old-timers tell us that in the early days of Gulfport and extending back to the days of the 1950 Veteran City development, the citizens either buried their garbage in their back yards or carried it themselves to the town dump. This dump was located on "Fiddler's Flats" (the tidal mud flats occupying the area west of 57th Street and south of 29th Avenue and extending out into the area now occupied by Town Shores). This, no doubt, created an unsightly and very odoriferous mess, some of which was carried out by tidal action to pollute the Bay.

By the mid-1920's, the City's population had grown, both in the area south of Gulfport Blvd. and in the Pasadena Estates area, to the point where that odoriferous mess could no longer be tolerated. Council minutes contain no mention of the situation, but Walter Brooks, Deputy Fire Department Chief, tells us that in 1924 or 1925 an incinerator was constructed behind City Hall. Two men, using a "scow" body truck, picked up all the City's garbage and burned it in that

incinerator. Those taped memoirs tell us that they received part of their wages by selling to a junk dealer the scrap metals they picked up. Garbage was picked up and burned four days a week, and lawn and garden trash was picked up on Fridays and burned on the "Flats."

By 1945, the population of Gulfport had grown to the point where this system could no longer serve the needs of the City. Complaints about air pollution and odors from the incinerator (in the center of the most heavily populated part of the City) had grown to the point where Council was forced to do something about it.

A contract was entered into with a Mr. Permenter of Largo for collecting the City's garbage and burning it in his own incinerator. This was located in the area north of Tyrone Blvd. at Park Street, still a wilderness at that time.

Lawn and garden trash continued to be burned on the "Flats" until the mid-1950's, when Mr. Dixie Hollins seawalled and filled the area. Trash burning was then moved to another mud flat area on the north side of the road from Clam Bayou out to Osgood's Point. Burning continued there until environmental considerations forced discontinuing the practice in the mid-1960's.

In the meantime, it appears that Mr. Permenter's garbage collecting services were not entirely satisfactory. About 1950 Council engaged the engineering firm of Russell & Axton to study the feasibility of building a new incinerator and resuming City-operated garbage collection services. The final recommendations of this study are unknown, but City Council took no action at that time.

In 1958, Council terminated Mr. Permenter's contract, purchased two rear-loading sanitation trucks, and resumed City-operated collection of both garbage and trash, with three men required to operate and load each truck. As each truck was filled up, it had to be driven to dumps operated by the City of St. Petersburg for unloading. The first such dump used was on 62nd Avenue Northeast — the site now occupied by Mangrove Bay Golf Course and two City parks. When that dump was filled up and closed, the Gulfport trucks had to make the much longer trip to the Toytown Landfill.

As the population of Gulfport grew, more trucks and more employees were added. Otherwise, the collection and disposal methods of garbage and trash remained basically unchanged until 1976, when things began to change (as discussed in the following article).



**SOURCES:**

Except where otherwise mentioned in the text, all information for this article was furnished by Mr. L. T. (Tim) McCarthy, City Superintendent of Gulfport.

## ***GARBAGE / TRASH COLLECTION AND DISPOSAL*** **(Modern Days)**

The first draft of this article was written by, and additional information furnished by, Mr. William F. Brown, Director of Public Works.

By 1976, Gulfport's garbage and trash collection system was still basically as described in the preceding article, except that population growth now required eight rear-loading sanitation trucks with a total of twenty-four employees. Four of the trucks were required to serve the four residential garbage routes twice per week, with one serving the commercial and Town Shores areas. Two trucks picked up residential lawn and garden trash twice each month. (One truck was held in reserve to maintain service during breakdowns.) As each truck became loaded, it had to make the twenty-odd mile round trip to the Toytown dump to unload, severely reducing the number of hours per day it and its crew could be picking up garbage or trash. The never ending inflation of all costs involved was making this operation intolerably expensive. The then Director of Public Works, Mr. Danny Todd, proposed to Council a new system under which residents would combine their garbage and trash, all to be picked up twice each week. This proposed system would have eliminated the twice monthly trash pickup, would have saved the costs involved in the operation of two trucks, and would have required six less employees.

City Council refused to adopt this new system, perhaps because of opposition by City employees, perhaps because of the extra burden it would have imposed upon the homeowners in cutting all tree trimmings and other lawn trash into four-foot lengths.

Early in 1977, Mr. William F. Brown became Director of Public Works, and one of his first acts was to propose implementation of Mr. Todd's system. It was proven to Council that if something was not done — and done soon — the then residential garbage and trash pickup charge of \$3.50 per month would have to rise to at least \$8.00 per month; but that with the Todd system a rate increase to only \$3.95 per month would cover all costs. Council responded and ordered

the new system into effect in October, 1977. The immediate result was elimination of the use of two trucks and reduction of the work force from twenty-four to seventeen.

As a side benefit, our streets and alleys are cleaner and neater looking because of the elimination of large piles of tree trimmings and lawn trash awaiting the semi-monthly pickup.

Even though costs were being held down temporarily, inflation of all of those costs continued. Pinellas County had put into service its "Resource Recovery Plant" and, at the same time, the City of St. Petersburg had closed the Toytown landfill. And dumping charges imposed by the County at the Recovery Plant were substantially higher than those at Toytown had been.

(This Resource Recovery Plant is a very modern, state-of-the-art, pollution-free and expensive operation. It enables recovery of all metals included in the delivered refuse and, by burning at very high temperatures, the heating value in that refuse is recovered and used to generate electricity. Those metals, and the heating value, are lost forever when the refuse is buried in a landfill or otherwise dumped. The electricity generated and the recovered metals are sold, paying a part of the cost of operating the plant. At this writing, Pinellas County is doubling the size of the plant, which is located west of Interstate 275 and south of Roosevelt Blvd.)

Upon the recommendation of the then City Manager, Mr. Ellis Shapiro, City Council engaged a consulting firm — Management Improvement Corp. of America — to study the situation and to recommend changes which would at least contain costs, and hopefully reduce them. The study recommended two changes: (1) Build a transfer station and use a large compactor truck for the trips to the Recovery Plant, and (2) Automate the commercial collection service.

City Council accepted both recommendations and instructed Mr. Brown to get the automated commercial collection service into use as soon as possible. This automated collection system involves the use of large lightweight plastic garbage and trash cans which a device on the truck, operated by the driver, can pick up and dump into the truck with no manual labor involved. This automated pickup system requires two, sometimes three fewer employees, working fewer hours, than the old manual method had required.

The recommended transfer station, behind City Hall, was completed and put into operation in January, 1983. The

collection trucks unload into this station, which in turn loads a large semi-trailer truck equipped with a compacting unit. One trip of this compactor truck moves as much material to the Recovery Plant as had four trips of the collector trucks previously.

The final result of these two changes has been to reduce the number of employees to twelve, along with the need for only three of the rear-loading collecting trucks, the one automated collecting truck, and the one compactor truck.

Cutting down on the number of rear-loading collection trucks needed has enabled the reconditioning of that entire fleet and eliminated for many years the need for purchasing any new trucks. It has also provided a couple of always available spare trucks, insuring the maintenance of scheduled pickup service, even in cases of truck breakdown.

The exact cost-saving figures from these new systems are not available, but they have enabled holding the residential pickup charge at \$3.95 per month, in the face of ever-increasing labor, fuel, and maintenance costs. (St. Petersburg residents are currently paying over \$11.00 per month for a less desirable service.)

Unfortunately, nobody can predict how long the present \$3.95 charge can be held. The County has already announced that when the addition to the Recovery Plant goes into service, the dumping charge will increase. And all of the other costs involved continue to increase, year by year. However, with the very modern handling methods now in use, along with the minimum possible number of City employees involved, Gulfport residents can be assured of a clean city, at the lowest possible cost, for many years to come.

— Willard B. Simonds

## GULFPORT VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT

The mists of time obscure the activities of men to such a degree that after a few years have passed, no one remembers the exact details of even major events of history. Events of lesser impact are even more easily lost to succeeding generations. For the present group of firefighters in the City of Gulfport, we compile this account of the history of the Gulfport Volunteer Fire Department.

This account is as accurate as the existing records contained in minutes of meetings of the Department, records of the Fire Department and treasurers, and the memory of early



members can make it. The fact that minutes were faithfully recorded of virtually every meeting of this Department, beginning in January 1932, is astounding in itself. All kinds of important happenings were recorded or referred to, as well as trivia of every description. These minutes were kept for the information of the Department, without one thought as to the possibility that some fifty years hence they would reveal the innermost workings of that group. Any records of the Department before 1932 have been lost and details of organization and operation before that year are vague indeed.

One source of information — a news article in the *Gulfport Citizen*, 1947, states that the Department was organized in 1925. However, some men who became members between 1926 and 1933 maintain that the organization is much older than this. The writer remembers stories told of pre-motorized days, as follows:

The original fire house was in the vicinity of the present public library building at 55th Street and 28th Avenue; the exact location and what the building looked like is not known. After water mains were installed and the water tank erected, the fire house, town shops, and town hall were located at the present site, 2401 53rd Street South.

The earliest apparatus consisted of one soda-acid tank and hose-reel mounted on a two-wheel cart. "Pictures of this rig have existed in times past," said J. D. Girard. This machine was pulled by hand through the sand trails which served as streets in those days to the location of the alarm. If the fire had gained any headway at all before the arrival of this apparatus — manned by an intrepid group of pioneer volunteers — it was a lost cause. Central water supply and distribution was nonexistent; supply and transport came from individual wells serving homeowners with pitcher pumps and buckets. The prime prerequisite for firefighters in those days was even as today: a stout heart and a strong back.

Another interesting feature of early fire protection devices has come to light — a pump was installed at the waterfront designed to draft water from the Bay in the close proximity of the present-day Casino. A limited supply of hose was available so that upon receiving an alarm, the hoses could be stretched, the pump manned (literally, because it was hand-powered) and the pump primed with buckets from the Bay. Salt water was then pumped from the Bay to the fire (if the hose was long enough). If the hose didn't reach, "goodbye house!"

When a piece of motorized fire apparatus was added, fire protection was greatly improved. The exact date of its construction is not certain; however, some of the details are remembered by those who used it. The newspaper article of 1947 (already referred to) credits the construction of the unique machine to Mr. Jerome Girard, but Mr. Girard, an Honorary Lifetime Member of the Department, states that the truck was built by Mr. Sid Webb who, with his father, Wesley Webb, were early firefighters. Sid served as Chief for a number of years; he resigned in 1934 and was succeeded by Howard Hayes.

The truck, a 1921-23 model Studebaker, was donated to the Department by a public-spirited citizen whose name is not recorded. The large touring car body was removed except for the front fenders, cowl and hood. Two tanks were mounted, one for water, one for air; the water tank was filled and a valve closed between the air tank and the water tank. The air tank was then pressurized with as much air pressure as was available; the apparatus was then ready to discharge water from the water tank simply by opening the air valve between the two tanks. Water was discharged through the small hose carried on the truck; this hose possibly came from the old hand-drawn hose cart. The sand streets — if they can be called streets! — and large uninhabited areas presented a real challenge to the early firefighters, even with this improved equipment. Shovels, brooms, pine tree tops, and tow ropes were essential tools for early operation.

Although there were less than 300 residents in the town of Gulfport in 1925, there seems to have been little hesitation about buying a brand new custom-built American La France Model 75 pumper. This apparatus had a 750-gpm pump capacity with a chemical tank and booster hose.

From a hand-drawn chemical tank/hose cart to one of the finest pieces of motorized fire apparatus available anywhere in the world was real progress. It was purchased by means of a bond issue which was retired but a few years before the apparatus itself was retired. This model apparatus became the standard of craftsmanship, performance, and endurance in the United States for many years. The pumper served the town of Gulfport as its first line apparatus until 1956 and is still in our possession, being retired from active duty in 1968. It might appear that the Department and town fathers had delusions of grandeur in purchasing such a piece of equipment at such a cost when there was not one foot of water

main nor hydrant in the town. However, in retrospect, we can see that it was well worth the price of \$12,000. A few years later, the economic situation was such that an expenditure of this magnitude would have been impossible.

Two years after the purchase of this apparatus, a water system with hydrants at regular intervals and an elevated tank were installed. Several main streets were paved with brick and others were covered with shell, increasing firefighting capabilities to a point undreamed of a short time past.

The events around 1932 are a little confused and an exact roster is not available, but the members paid dues in the amount of fifteen cents per month. Any member in arrears for three months could look forward with some degree of certainty to a date in court — this court being duly established (to which the authority to levy fines was given) handed out said penalties freely. A record of court proceedings for July 5, 1932, reveals fines ranging from five cents for sitting on the pool table (a most grievous crime) to one cent for contempt of court. It seems that the pool table was more precious by far than the dignity of the court! The court was the epitomy of justice and fair dealings since the same record reveals that fines were levied against every man present or absent, including the judge! This “kangaroo,” “cangroo,” “cangaro” (any variety of spellings) court existed for a number of years.

The year 1933 was one of Great Anxiety and Crisis. The Depression was in its darkest days and the town was, with the rest of the nation, greatly affected. A committee of the Council charged with the responsibility for the Fire Department (known as the Fire Committee) came to a meeting of the Fire Department where the members in business session sat around with their feet propped up, solving all of the political, financial, and ethnic problems of the world.

“The City is financially embarrassed,” they said, “and we can no longer pay you.” When asked to continue without pay, the chairs flopped down and feet hit the floor sounding like thunder; some walked out and never looked back; but those who stayed voted 100% to serve — pay or no pay! This spirit has prevailed to this day!

During the trying times of the Depression there was an effort on the part of some members of the Town Council to get rid of the water system because it was felt that it was a liability to the town. A movement was started to turn the Water Department over to the City of St. Petersburg. As we



now know, this would have been a mistake because since then the Water Department has consistently shown a profit. Although there may have been some short-range advantages of giving it to St. Petersburg, overall we would have been the loser. We might even have to call them to put a meter on the hydrant before we could hook up a hose to fight a fire!

There was at this time some question as to who was actually on the Fire Department, so a list was submitted to the Fire Committee on February 7, 1934, of those officially on the Department. (In the following list, drivers are italicized.)

Norman Huckins  
*Ralph McRoberts*  
Arthur Benn  
*Jerome Girard*  
*Howard Hayes*

Russel Barrow  
Johnnie Hudson  
*Mack Brooks*  
*Reese Whitworth*  
Virgil Pegg

Among the rules or revisions to rules: (1) False alarms not to be counted as fires and no deductions made for them. (2) First speed limit imposed of 30 miles per hour. (3) On drills, meeting night changed from Wednesday to Monday. (4) Fire Chief to be marked present and paid in full for all fires and drills whether present or not.

In October, the allowance for the Department was raised from \$3.00 to \$5.00 per man per month, but it was just an allowance since the town still had no money.

Great undertakings marked the earliest meetings of 1935, and a money-raising effort was launched in the form of a minstrel show named the "Dark Town Fire Brigade" (sic). Mack Brooks was drafted as the director over his most vigorous protests. Rehearsals began with each man coming up with four or five good jokes gleaned from the pages of show script purchased for that purpose. These efforts continued until nobody could stand any more and practice was discontinued early in March.

A record of five alarms in 1935 reveal a total of 36. These included seven house fires, one automobile fire, one electric pole fire, and 27 grass fires; 52 drills were listed but this actually included business meetings where great national and international problems were solved with great solemnity, volumes of oratory, and ice cream. Ice cream was consumed by the gallon (three gallons for \$1.75, delivered from St. Petersburg).

Progress and tragedy marked the early months of 1936.

The telephone extension was installed in the Fire Station the first week in January, and by April 27, the Fire Department telephone number was listed in the telephone book in large black type. Three of the six waterproof coats were ordered; this is the first record of any personal protective gear provided for the comfort and safety of the Gulfport firefighters. On April 20, 1936, the meeting was marked by serious discussion brought about by a fatal fire in which two victims perished. The alarm for this fire was sounded by a neighbor rapping on the bedroom window of Mack Brooks who lived in the same block in which the fire occurred. The involved structure was on the corner of Dellette Avenue and Beach Blvd. (a small radio shop/residence). The victims were Horace Tross and a friend, both home from college for a holiday. Speculations at the time ranged from one possibility to another. Theory had it that an explosion occurred. Since the young men were in college and were supposed to be experimenting with chemicals, this was a distinct possibility. The fire was extremely hot and had to be fought from the middle of the street. After the fire was controlled, the bodies were discovered — one just inside the front door and one just inside the show windows. The cause of the fire was never determined, and no criticism of the Department's actions was offered. The fire was extinguished in good time and the building was structurally intact afterward — but every man felt the effects for years afterward.

Although the economic situation was still worse than terrible, plans were laid in late 1936 for the improvement of the station and the meeting hall which played such an important part in the organization, especially the social aspect of it.

The town was not able to build a "club" room, so permission was granted for the men of the Department to do it themselves. The Council, through the Fire Committee, promised to cooperate in providing the material "as much as possible" with the Department providing the labor. Plans for the addition were drawn by Mr. C. C. Hayes, the father of Chief Howard Hayes, and the effort to build was begun! (The Department still has one of the original prints of the plans.) With only a few dollars in the treasury, the problem facing them in providing the labor for this project was critical. Various schemes were pursued in order to raise the needed funds. Many lots needed to be cleared and burning them safely brought contributions into the fund. Various

prominent citizens were solicited for contributions and the response was very gratifying. Although the individual amounts were small by today's standards, they were numerous and a strict account was kept of the donors and donations. A list of donors appeared in the *Gulfport Tribune* regularly.

Construction began August 11, 1936, by removing the station roof since permission had been obtained to build the meeting room and watchman's quarters above the apparatus garage and jail. It was necessary to move the pool table to a tractor shed and the La France also. It was discovered that the pumper was too high to clear the overhead structure of the shed so dirt was removed, lowering the fire engine enough to clear the roof. The cost to the town for supplying the material amounted to about \$1300.

Mack Brooks was persuaded to act as construction foreman — after declining the honor once because he was employed — and construction proceeded. Much of the labor was donated, some was supplied by the town crew, for which the Department reimbursed the town; and some of the men were paid directly for their labor on the project.

The watchman's quarters consisted of a sitting room, bedroom, toilet, and kitchen, the kitchen being accessible to the meeting hall. Plaster walls and pine floors constituted the finish in the apartment; magnolia paneling and flooring provided a very unique and beautiful finish in the meeting hall. There had been so much trouble caused by the old "side arm" kerosene water heaters in town (it was estimated that 95% of the house fires resulted from the malfunction of those heaters) that the Department would have nothing to do with them and decided instead to use a *gasoline* water heater! It was considered safer!! We might note that there were six or seven alarms at the Methodist Parsonage on 28th Avenue behind the church; all of them resulted from the malfunction of a kerosene water heater.

A contract to finish the carpentry on the hall was let to a Mr. Fuller, but he failed to perform. He was paid for the labor completed and a new contract was signed by a Mr. McKnight who also failed to complete the work. The Department then prevailed upon Mack Brooks and Norman Huckins, both active firemen, to complete the carpentry on the hall for the balance in the fire hall fund which amounted to approximately \$90.00. These men completed the work readily, both of them being fine craftsmen of the "old



school." Johnnie Hudson plastered the watchman's quarters for a total of \$30.00 labor; Howard Hayes donated the labor for the electrical work; Walter Roberts donated his time to install plumbing.

The problem of a finish then occupied the attention of the group; many samples were presented but no agreement could be reached on a finish for the magnolia paneling. Then Mr. Richard Gray, a member of the Council, a master painter, and artist of considerable local fame, volunteered to decorate the room. Samples were submitted, accepted, and the work was quickly completed. The finish which was chosen consisted of "graining" and "highlighting" the natural characteristics of the wood with clear shellac applied over it. The beauty of this room has been a source of pride even to this present day. We have devoted this much space to an account of the building of this hall because it was such a monumental undertaking, required so much effort on the part of the Department, and has served the Department so well down through the years. Some of the present-day firemen "grew up" with the room as Cub Scouts, Boy Scouts, and as rookie firefighters.

A dance and show was sponsored and produced by the Department on October 6, 1937, and netted \$228.15 which was immediately used for the purchase of ten chairs and a settee for the meeting hall. This furniture is still in use, having been recovered once, which is amazing considering the fact that Boy Scout Troop #15 was allowed to use the hall. This Troop was sponsored by the Department and Fireman Jerome Girard was the Scout Master. This was the only group outside the Department ever allowed to use the hall. This policy has been continued since its formulation in 1937.

A request was made to the Council through the Fire Committee for an increase in the Fire Department allowance. December 6, 1937, a \$20.00 increase was granted for a total Department allowance of \$55.00 per month. After being granted this increase, a new fire truck proved a topic for discussion, and on January 17, 1938, it was decided to buy a new fire truck. A fire truck fund was set up following the same pattern used to finance and build the meeting room. The financial accounting of this period is revealing, their courage and fortitude beyond disputing.

It seemed possible that 1980 might be a reasonable date to expect the purchase of a fire truck at this rate, so the Council was approached concerning the possibility of co-

operating. The Council responded by budgeting \$1500 for the fire truck fund.

Service to the community in the form of fire protection was the primary intent of the Fire Department, but following the established pattern of concern for assistance to *every* worthy cause, the Department also offered its services in case of kidnapping effective June 13, 1938. Additionally, food baskets for the needy were placed in local business establishments, and donations were received for this charitable endeavor. Labor was provided for a "certain party" in need; donations were made to such funds as the Cancer Society, March of Dimes, Muscular Dystrophy, Milk Fund, Shoe Fund, and many others. The Department sponsored donations to pay the doctor bill for "Uncle" Jim Barnett — \$12.00 donated by the Department, plus an additional \$28.00 in donations received by the Department, satisfied the bill.

A list of qualifications for membership into the Fire Department was compiled at a meeting on November 14, 1938, to insure the continuation of the standards of which they were justly proud. Some of the qualifications specified were: 18 years of age, of good moral character, live where siren can be heard and have some means of transportation to respond to an alarm. (Anyone coming to a meeting or a fire "under the influence" was subject to immediate dismissal.)

March 20, 1939, a great day dawned and with it the delivery of a brand new Peter Pirsch fire apparatus built on a 1939 Ford chassis. This truck carried a 300-gallon water tank, a 150-gpm pump, a hose bed for 2½-inch hose, 1½-inch hose, and a hose reel for a booster line. The primary intent of the Department in the purchase of this truck was for use on grass fires and was commonly called the "grass truck." It had dual wheels where the old Studebaker had singles and was expected not to get stuck so easily. Imagine the disappointment when it answered its first alarm, which was on 29th Avenue between 52nd and 53rd Streets, and immediately got stuck up to the frame in sand not more than three feet from the road!

The wisdom displayed on insisting on a new truck rather than a used one is revealed by the fact that World War II was only two and one-half years away. This piece of equipment served the Department faithfully until it was replaced in 1963 and serves the City in the Street Department even

now as an oil truck. Parts of this truck were removed, remodeled, and used in building our "do it all" number 12.

It was the usual thing for the watchman or his wife to clean the fire hall after meetings and to answer the fire telephone when the City Hall was closed. The apartment was furnished free in exchange for their services. Mr. Wintersgill was the watchman for several years; then Mr. and Mrs. Carter lived in the apartment and tended the watch duties. Mrs. Carter received a 100% increase in pay for cleaning the hall — she was paid \$2.00 per month beginning in 1939. Also serving the Department as watchmen through the years were: Nellie and Malcolm Whitworth, Mr. and Mrs. Brown, Mr. and Mrs. Mark Elliott, Mr. and Mrs. Gwen Anderson, and Mr. and Mrs. Shaw. They served during various years and their tenure usually lasted for several years at a time.

A retirement/pension fund was established by the Florida State Legislature, becoming effective June 26, 1939, and the Department began to receive a small amount of money from a small tax on every fire insurance policy written in Gulfport.

Great debates still raged about the war, the entering into it by the United States, and the possibility of our country being bombed. It was at this point we learned Gulfport was bomb-proof. It was observed — and recorded in the minutes of August 4, 1941 — that there was such a quantity of bull about and so much hot air rising from a certain local group that no bomb could possibly penetrate the "atmospheric condition above our fair town; therefore, Gulfport was bomb-proof."

A fire prevention measure was instituted on October 20, 1941, when the City adopted the Fire Code of the National Board of Fire Underwriters. The Department was now in a position to do something about unsafe conditions in City business establishments and public buildings — especially kerosene water heaters.

Efforts to make things a little better for their fellow citizens continued to be of concern to the Fire Department members, and a new roof was donated to the town for the Community Hall located in Chase Park.

The greatest impact was on the manpower aspect of the fire service. Several men went into the armed services, leaving the Department short-handed; also, several men who were in construction industries had to leave the area which further depleted the ranks. Others worked long hours in Tampa each day; this caused further shortage. The solution to the situa-



tion was the formation of an Auxiliary Department. It was made up of men who had been deferred for some reason which would not impair their ability to perform firefighting duties. Some men were over age for military duty but still capable of good performance in the Department. Another group whose abilities were put to good use in the Department's Auxiliary consisted of boys who the men, to some extent, had "raised" themselves. These were the older group of Boy Scouts from Troop 15 which the Department had been sponsoring for years. They had demonstrated a degree of stability, dependability, and teachability. These arrangements, instituted to solve the manpower problems, worked very well. With hard training and careful supervision, the Auxiliary and the regulars functioned efficiently. Although the Auxiliary met separately from the regulars for a few months, the distinction between them gradually disappeared. The Auxiliary members were paid for the fires they helped fight but not for meetings or drills. The Auxiliary men understood from the start that they were "filling in for the duration." They were given preference of a regular spot after hostilities ceased and "our boys" came home. Most of them came home, but two did not. Because they gave their lives for their country — and ours — gold stars appear by their names on the honor roll. They were Gilbert Lewis and Jimmy Dietrich. Several men who came on the Department as Auxiliaries went on to become regular firemen and served faithfully and well.

Civic interest inspired the Department to again extend a helping hand. Fourteen blankets were purchased from Webb's Cut Rate Drug Co., Inc. (later famous as "Webb's City") for the sum of \$17.50 (\$1.25 each) and donated them to the first aid station connected to the Defense program. Fourteen more blankets were soon purchased and donated to the same cause.

The Fire Department was involved in many activities connected with Civil Defense — undergoing training in first aid as well as regular firefighting. The Auxiliary drilled with the regulars, and under the guidance of older men became proficient firefighters. Equipment to upgrade our efficiency or service was not available and replacement of equipment was almost nonexistent; although we were able to replace some defective lengths of hose, the supply gradually dwindled. It was noted at one time that there were only 150 feet of 2½-inch hose on the grass truck which normally carried 1000

feet. Anything which contained rubber was in critical demand, and supply to the armed forces came first. We were able to make do with what we had.

The war had caused many items to become scarce. Rationing was in effect. Some firemen felt that since they used gasoline to attend fire drills and fires, they were due some consideration in the rationing allotment. Surprisingly enough, ration stamps for 15 gallons of gasoline were made available to those firemen "who needed them." This practice was continued on a monthly basis until rationing was no longer necessary.

On August 13, 1945, the minutes of the meeting indicated that a Resolution of Sympathy had been written, adopted, and delivered (with a floral arrangement) to Mrs. Gilbert Lewis, whose husband, a firefighter, had been killed in action. A sad duty indeed.

A new concept in firefighting began to be discussed. The old method had been to pour on water — the more the better; if you can't get to it, drown it. Men coming home from the service, however, had had a different experience and had received training in a new method of fire attack. The use of fog nozzles on small lines had been proven to be very effective. This was especially true in the Navy and many of our men were now Navy Veterans, even though they were in their early twenties. Through the influence of these men, aided by some timely publications, the use of high pressure fog was experimented with and found acceptable — even superior in some cases to the old solid stream system.

In 1949, recommendations were again submitted to the Council for water main extensions, more fire hydrants, and more large-diameter connections to our supplier, the City of St. Petersburg. This problem was becoming more serious as time went on because building rates were accelerating and the water system was rapidly being overwhelmed. A new water line installed on 9th Avenue, with hydrants in every block, relieved a critical situation in the old Pasadena section of town in late 1949. The year 1950 brought variations of old problems and some new ones, too.

The Gulfport area was expanding rapidly. No local ambulance service was available since all of the funeral homes which operated ambulance service were in St. Petersburg. As a result of less than speedy, dependable service (at least in the opinion of some), an effort was made to establish a local ambulance service. A citizens' committee approached the

Fire Department with a plan to establish an ambulance service in partnership with the Police Department — a second-hand ambulance, with a price tag of \$4100, had been located. The Council assured both Departments of the cooperation of the Town Council. The question was placed directly to the Fire Department as to whether they wanted to undertake this project or not. The members, after long and careful deliberation, decided not to enter this endeavor. Shortly afterwards, an ambulance service was established in Gulfport and rendered valuable service to the town and to the Department, even responding to fire calls automatically. Thus, the problem was solved without Fire Department involvement and in a much more satisfactory manner.

On March 5, 1951, requests were presented to Council for a Fire Department emergency phone separate from the Police phone; four smoke masks; a portable generator; lights; extension cords, and a smoke fan. Also, it was noted that the Ford was carrying only 250 feet of 2½-inch hose and additional 2½-inch hose was needed. Before any disposition of these requests was made by Council — and since all service smoke masks for fire service cost \$40.50 — it was thought expedient to try WWII surplus gas masks to see whether or not they would be acceptable for our use. Two of these surplus masks were purchased from Bill Jackson for \$2.50 each and a test was conducted to check out their performance. The test was simple enough — set fire to something in an enclosed space, put on a mask and go into the smoke — if you survived, it was a success; if not, we would have to try something else! This was not scientific, but you couldn't beat it for logic. A mattress was set afire in the closed fire truck stall; men with the masks went in and performed simple tasks to see how they could operate under those conditions. They reported no discomfort so the test was pronounced a success and it was decided to buy two more masks at a cost of \$3.35. We wonder now what a dozen would have cost — also, what the cost of a medium range funeral was then — and what would have been the far-reaching health hazard?

Gulfport in mid and late 1951 was using more water than could be supplied to it by the St. Petersburg water system and a critical stage was reached. The static pressure at 27th Avenue and 49th Street was tested one Monday night in August and the reading was only 15 lbs. Some residents on the second floor of dwellings could not get any water at all during certain hours of the day. Many meetings were held



with Councilmen and the Mayor and chief officers of the Department. Feeling was running pretty high; we were expected to protect the City from fire and yet we didn't have the water system nor supply to do the job.

The National Board of Fire Underwriters rated Gulfport's fire defenses in the 6 category, and the Mayor promised a new fire station and new equipment would be provided to us. We were encouraged to think about more and improved equipment so a set of specifications were written in an open meeting for the purchase of a 500-gpm pumper on a Ford chassis. We were assisted in this endeavor by the representative of a fire equipment manufacturer. A Ford was specified because of the dependable performance of the 1939 Peter Pirsch rig and the experience of several of the men with commercial chassis similar to the one which would carry this equipment. Plans were submitted and approved by Council for remodeling of the station to accommodate a new pumper plus the existing equipment. This work was accomplished by means of subcontracting some work — work by the City crew and some volunteer labor. It was ready when the pumper was delivered. Bids were advertised and two manufacturers bid on the pumper — American La France Co. and Seagrave. After carefully evaluating the specifications and descriptions of the two engines bid, the Fire Department recommendation to the Council was for the Seagrave. Council voted subsequently to follow the Department's recommendation and the Seagrave was purchased.

The suggestion was made to name trucks in honor of some of our senior citizens. It was voted to name the new Seagrave "Captain Walt Williams." It was actually named for him because he was a distinguished citizen, Mayor, friend to the Fire Department, and instrumental in the purchase of the Seagrave. After the Seagrave apparatus was delivered on March 7, 1955, a name plaque was presented to Captain Walt Williams which he placed on the Seagrave pumper. Capt. Williams was then given a ride in the apparatus named in his honor — he was taken to his home, very much moved by the honor bestowed upon him.

Only one month passed between the time a request was made for bunker coats and helmets until the first bunker coats were placed on the apparatus. One month later, in September, helmets joined the coats on the rail of the Seagrave and the days of bareheaded, barebacked firefighting was over!

This had been a year for firsts and it closed out on the same note; for on the 12th of December, 1955, we completed the first Florida State Fire College itinerate fire school — 15 hours of intensive training. There were to be many more, but it started right here!!

The year 1956 began even as 1955 had closed — with a first. A self-contained oxygen mask<sup>s</sup> was added to our personal protective equipment inventory. This mask was usable in atmospheres deficient in oxygen which was an improvement over the canister mask which was simply a filter that had to be used in an atmosphere containing sufficient oxygen to sustain life. The filter mask was, however, the mainstay of breathing apparatus for some time.

March 16, 1956, an explosion set off a major fire in Osgood's Marine Ways which totally destroyed the building. The efforts to fight this fire were hampered by a poor water supply, but the main problem developed from the inability to penetrate the sheet metal siding and roof to get to the fire. St. Petersburg responded to this alarm at our request and attempted to activate a master stream device, but the water supply was inadequate.

Bids were received for a new siren. (The federal authorities would participate in the purchase of this equipment if it were designated as a civil defense siren; they would then allow it to be used also as a fire siren.) A bid was awarded and a federal siren was purchased. The first time it was sounded was Monday night, March 25, 1957, and boy, was it loud! It was rated at 125 decibels at one-quarter mile, and we received telephone inquiries from six miles away! Although we had discussed a telephone alarm system and a radio alerting system, this new siren sufficed for the time being.

Our operations on the fire scene slowly became more professional and no criticisms were being made. It was felt (mostly within the Department), however, that we still looked pretty rag-tag personally; it was difficult to distinguish between firefighters and spectators as we wore the same type clothing. White, long-sleeved coveralls, of a heavy material, with the Department's name on them and the fireman's name sewn on the pocket were obtained at a cost of \$6.50 each. These certainly enhanced our appearance at fires and drills but brought to light another problem — now we needed air conditioning in the meeting hall because of the heavy uniforms. One window unit was installed and then two more, creating comfort but noise. Oh, well, you can't have

everything, as the saying goes.

In November, 1957, a new Fire Prevention Code was adopted by the City Council and Mr. McCarthy was appointed Chief of the Fire Prevention Bureau.

The City presented us with insurance covering death or disability for the benefit of the individual fireman or his survivors, the cost borne completely by the City.

In 1951 we continued to add new equipment to our fire-fighting inventory and with the delivery of a 1500-watt generator, two 500-watt lamps and a smoke fan, we had the means to do a better job of ventilation and overhaul. Each fireman was issued a 2½-lb. dry powder extinguisher which was to be carried in his automobile. Over the years, many fires were handled by this means.

A major improvement came in April 1961, in one of our most critical occupancies, when the Cedar's Hospital was sprinkled from top to bottom. This structure was built in 1900 of the very best heart pine and covered on the exterior with cedar shingles. A few years ago, it was covered on the exterior with asbestos siding. Originally it was known as the Bay View Hotel which was a very appropriate name, because the Bay came within a few feet of the south side. The land south of the hotel was pumped in early in the 1920's. It was subsequently known as the "Pipin Hot Inn" and now the "Cedars." This brings a great feeling of relief to the Department because this frame building has been a source of great concern over the years since it became a hospital facility.

In April 1961, there was some feeling in the group that there was a lack of direction at a fire scene and that too many people were doing their own thing with too little organization over each crew. This was particularly problematic at a fire where the Chief and Assistant Chief were absent. The suggestion was made that in addition to a Chief and Assistant Chief, that we have a Captain and two Lieutenants; so Tim McCarthy was elected Captain, Evan Bodie - Lieutenant, and Nathan White - Lieutenant. The Captain was to wear a gold strap on his cap and the Lieutenants silver ones.

Chief Brooks, with the authorization of the Department, requested the Council to provide funds for a pickup truck to be equipped with a larger generator, lights, smoke fans, extra personal gear, and small tools — the cost to be \$5,900.00. Also requested was a Council appropriation of



\$2,000.00 per year allowance toward the replacement of the Peter Pirsch Ford.

Early in 1962, the Ford pickup was placed in service and proved to be a valuable piece of equipment with its 2500-watt electric starting generator, porto-power, and related hand tools. It served as a service truck and rescue truck as equipment was added over a period of years.

The 1962 budget request contained provisions for two mobile radio units for the two engines most frequently used — the Seagrave and the Peter Pirsch Ford. Also in the budget was a chassis and allowance for pump, tank, etc. for a replacement for the "grass truck."

Efforts were underway in August of 1962 to write specifications for a new fire truck chassis in order to replace the Peter Pirsch Ford. The specifications were presented to the City Manager for bidding. The bids were returned and the contract was awarded for a Dodge D500 chassis which was delivered, and in December 1962, construction was started on the new truck.

Some personnel changes were in order after the resignation of Assistant Chief Malcolm Whitworth. Chief Brooks recommended that Captain L. T. McCarthy be promoted to the office of Assistant Chief and this was voted by the Department in the affirmative. Also elected were Nathan White as Captain, Walter Brooks as Lieutenant, and Evan Bodie continued as a Lieutenant.

The new truck which had been under construction for about five months was completed and with a feeling of great pride of accomplishment was placed in service on May 6, 1963. The new truck #12 followed closely the concept which began in 1939 with the purchase of the Peter Pirsch Ford. It carries a 500-gallon water tank where the Ford had 300, and the hose bed for 2½-inch hose has a greater capacity. Overall, however, the idea is about the same, and since the Ford had been so successful, there was no need to change radically. The chassis of #12 is of greater capacity, tire size larger, and brakes vastly superior. The work of design was accomplished primarily by Chief Mack Brooks with the majority of the actual work of assembly done by members of the Department. All of the work was done as accurately and as carefully as we were capable of, every dimension and location of every valve, fitting, nut and bolt were carefully assembled throughout. The result was, and is, a very happy combination of successful design and craftsmanship. This is

borne out by the fact that 13 years in service finds everything virtually as it was when we put it into service. I might also add that this truck is a little longer, heavier, and with a capacity for 1000-1200 feet of 2½-inch hose; but it closely resembles the "mini-pumper" concept of the present day and we've had substantially the same thing since 1939. The Council set up an \$8,500 budget for this apparatus, including the chassis and several hundred dollars were returned to them upon completion. Some parts of the old Ford were used such as the hose body, hand rails, and hose reel; the hose body was widened and lengthened. The tank, which is new and constructed by Bickley Forge, is low, flat, and with the top removable completely for repair or maintenance. The running boards and combination fender compartments were also fabricated by Bickley and cut, fitted, mounted, and assembled by the Department. After completion, the men of the Department wanted to honor the man most responsible for the idea, planning, and execution of the project, so a plaque was purchased, each man's name inscribed on the back, and the plaque mounted on the truck August 19, 1963, where it remains today. The plaque reads "Mack O. Brooks" and was indicative of the regard they had for him by naming the apparatus in his honor. This plaque is to remain on the truck until its retirement, at which time the plaque is to become Mack Brooks' personal property.

In addition to the new apparatus placed in service, this year brought about the introduction of the first compressed air self-contained breathing apparatus. The all-purpose masks must be used with discretion, because of the necessity to operate in a minimum of 16% oxygen atmosphere; and there is some feeling that the oxygen mask presents a danger from oxygen saturation of clothing and bunker gear making them extremely flammable. So the addition of straight breathing air solves both of these problems. The cost is great but the aim is to obtain, in due time, air masks for everyone who must enter a building full of smoke.

March 3, 1970, the new Ward La France was delivered. It was driven from Elmira, New York, 1301 miles, by Mr. Tom Taylor, delivery engineer. Chief McCarthy, Chief White, Captain Brooks, and Fireman Don Gray met the apparatus in St. Petersburg and drove it to the Little League field where the road grime was washed off. It was then delivered to the fire station and met there by Councilmen Perry, Markham, Clymer, Skinner, and Walker, who were given a ride on the

new apparatus. It is a Diesel-powered rig with a 1250-gpm Hale pump, 500-gallon water tank, full compartments, and is one of the finest rigs available anywhere. It surely is a welcome addition to our fleet of which we are justly proud. This is the first Diesel-powered pumper in this area of Florida.

An improvement took place in May 1970, for which we had contended for a long time, when plectron units were distributed to all firemen. It immediately proved to be a very reliable system, which served to alert all of the men who were at home, increasing our response at all alarms and to eliminate the traffic going to a fire and the number of spectators at the scene, especially at night. The siren continues to be used the hours of 7:00 a.m. and 10:00 p.m. for those men who are not near their plectron units.

An Emergency Medical Technician course was conducted at the Gulfport station over a period of several weeks which Chief White, Fireman Fred and Rick Johnson, Bob Worthington, Jack Tapscott, Will Travis, Will Lewis, and Bob Hunt attended. During this period of time, the other men trained on other subjects, such as F. D. knots, forceable entry, pump operations, and general equipment use.

Additions to our equipment list included an overhead projector for use in training and a hose-drying cabinet in which hose can be dried after a fire or washing. A new 45-foot aluminum ladder has been placed in service, the one which was purchased for delivery on the Ward La France has proven to be very successful so another was purchased. The deluge nozzle, which has seen so little use since 1939, has been pre-connected to #12's pump, a fog tip added with the idea in mind being a blitz attack on a fire to knock it down before men approach it too closely.

First, a plan was devised where Chief N. White responded directly to fires north of Gulfport Blvd. and Captain Brooks responded directly to fires south of Gulfport Blvd. In this system, they would be at the fire scene some two or three minutes before the arrival of the other apparatus and could size up the situation and direct the incoming units as to their needed action as they approached the scene.

This system proved to be a very successful one and was put to the test almost immediately at a fire in the construction area of Towne Shores Apartments. Some oil drums and storage sheds in the area were involved and the first truck in laid a line going in and also tested our new deluge set-up by knocking down the fire around the drums from a distance.



The arrival of an officer early proved to be advantageous and the blitz attack worked fine.

A very unusual number of structure fires at night occurred in a two-month period of time during May and June of 1974. All of them, except the one at the fire station, took place within a very limited area. All of them occurred at night and some of them caused heavy damage to the structures involved. There was some speculation concerning possible arson and seemed confirmed after a fire in a house in which a cache of marijuana was uncovered and an automatic weapon with a quantity of ammunition was found. At this call, a suspect was arrested and the incidents stopped. Included in the number of alarms was one at the old fire station, in the area of the vacant watchman's quarters. That is a call that surely does get to you, almost like getting a call to your own home.

In August, a new closed body van was delivered to the Department and was built up as a heavy rescue, squad, and utility vehicle. All of the work of arranging the interior and building all of the bins and fixtures in the new unit was performed by members of the Department. This unit is a valuable addition to our fleet.

A few years ago, when anyone spoke of forceable entry, he had reference to axes, bars, and sledge hammers, and they still constitute valuable tools of the trade. We now refer to the K saw, a gasoline-powered, radial hand-held saw, Mack bar, and other hand tools, and we must be trained in the use of this new equipment.

Overhaul at one time consisted of opening the doors to allow the water to run out, encouraging it with a few brooms, mops, and squeegee, but now a man must be able to operate the water vacuum which will pick up all the water from a cement or tile floor and most of the water from even a carpet.

June, 1975, specifications were prepared, sent out, and bids were received for a new pumper. A new system of writing specifications was used for the first time. Rather than the Department writing specifications covering tire and spring capacities, location, and size of each compartments, size and location of each light, and almost every nut and bolt, a very concise specification covered all items in a general way. These were: diesel-powered, automatic transmission, five-man cab, 1250-gpm pump minimum, 500-gallon water tank minimum, and must meet all requirements of the National Fire Protective Association Pamphlet 19.

Bids were received from three companies. These were

Mack Fire Truck Company, American La France Company, and the Maxim Motors Division of the Seagrave Corporation. A very thorough evaluation of the bid specifications was conducted with each item tabulated in a comparison chart. Two manufacturers failed to meet the specifications in major categories and the choice lay among five different trucks offered by Maxim Motors.

The Council followed the recommendation of the Fire Department and purchased the apparatus which we felt most completely met our needs. An appropriation of \$4,000 was set aside for purchase of tools, fittings, and equipment with which to outfit the new engine. The new Maxim was numbered 14, and when completely outfitted, brings our fleet to the point where we are as well equipped as any fire department in the state. This pumper was delivered on September 1, 1975, being driven from Middleboro, Massachusetts, by one of Maxim Motors' delivery engineers, and Mr. Walter Manning, sales representative.

Our annual routine was followed early in 1976 when hose was tested as usual and the responsibility of our officers was shifted around. Many of the duties for our officers become boring after a period of time, so changing jobs around is welcomed by those involved. We thoroughly enjoyed a class conducted by Jerry Knight, Chief of Fire Suppression with the St. Petersburg Fire Department. Not only did we gain a better understanding of pump operations, we also answered a fire call to Town Shores with Chief Knight as observer. He gave us a critique on the operation. Chief Knight was favorably impressed with the orderly and efficient manner in which we handled it. For once everything went just right, and he was impressed.

Gulfport Fire Department has never had dress uniforms. Our white coveralls surely could not be considered dressy, and all we had before that were uniform caps! Boy, was I proud of mine! Now we are going to have trousers, shirts with all the insignia, patches, etc., and jackets and ties to finish it off. They were delivered August 30th, just in time for the dedication of the Fire Administration building. This new building, with a shop, meeting room complete with a kitchen, locker room shower and rest room, Chief's office, Conference Room and Report Room was dedicated on September 6, 1976, in honor of Chief L. T. McCarthy. There was a fine turnout of citizens and a proud day for all of us. We've come a long way from raising the roof of a one-story

combination garage and jail to having this new building of which we are so proud!

Our old American LaFrance engine has expired in spite of a liberal transfusion of money and effort to revive it. The men still want to use it for parades and such other gala events such as hauling Santa Claus, so a decision was made to put a high performance Dodge 360-cubic-inch engine and a Chrysler pushbutton automatic transmission in it temporarily until a supply of parts can be obtained to put the original engine in operating condition. Lt. Dewey Hunt was made the chief mechanic in this endeavor, with instructions to make no modifications to the original drive train or chassis which would in any way change its original condition. This was accomplished at the total cost of \$75.00 and not even a hole was drilled in the frame. The engine and transmission were mounted ahead of the original transmission and the American LaFrance radiator was used as is. This resulted in a nine forward speed, three speed reverse 1925 American LaFrance which, I am sure, could be said without fear of successful contradiction to be the only one in the world! Can you imagine 85 miles per hour in reverse? WOW!

Christmas! I wonder if the Christmas season means more to the children or to our people? I'm not going to include "Dutch" Fenstermacher in that question because I'm sure that Christmas means more to him than to any of the other aforementioned groups. "Dutch" is Santa Claus, over 80 years old, and he really comes into his own when he dons padding, whiskers, wig, and red-red outfit, and climbs upon the fire truck to be delivered to the annual Christmas tree lighting and party with all the decorations, red lights, sirens, bells and horns. He really enjoys it, and so do we!

1977 began with an organized fund-raising effort on the part of the Department for Muscular Dystrophy. Greg Davis, the local Muscular Dystrophy poster child was made an honorary member of the Fire Department. Thus the tradition of the Gulfport Fire Department's support of worthy causes is continued.

Our commitment to the Muscular Dystrophy drive resulted in holding a Memorial Day Flea Market, Fish Fry and Field Day on May 28, 1977, during which \$1,807 was contributed after expenses.

Saturday afternoon, temperature standing at 95 degrees, six men responding to the original alarm: a two-story house fully involved sets the scene for a bad afternoon. The apart-



ments at 2514 York Street were being renovated. Building materials were much in evidence as well as paint, thinners and attending material when the fire occurred. Chief McCarthy manned a nozzle and everybody did double duty, but made a good stop. We had not quite reached the point where we could relax just a little when men began to fall out from heat exhaustion and, before it was over, five men had been transported to the hospital to be checked out. As it turned out, everyone was all right.

Thank God for automatic sprinklers! When anyone says "Cedars" and "fire" in the same sentence, it makes you want to leave town. On June 25, 1977, the plectron sounded in the middle of the night and the dispatcher said we had a sprinkler alarm at the Cedars. Some of us literally prayed all the way — "Lord, don't let it be bad." Whether it was an answer to prayer or just the automatic sprinklers, we'll let you judge, but a lamp and a trash basket combined to cause a fire and one sprinkler head fused to put it out.

As one of the old radio characters would put it: "What a revolting development." And that's the mildest way to describe the following incident. We received an alarm from Gulf Club Estates of a wire down and a house on fire during a driving rainstorm with attendant wind and lightning. A full response was dispatched and No. 10 was going out Gulfport Blvd. at a very reduced rate of speed in deep water, since the streets had a foot of water or more flooding them. Well, reduced speed or not, by some freak happening, water was ingested into the diesel engine of No. 10 pumper. She then threw two rods completely and bent the other four; it cost several thousand dollars to rebuild. We never were able to determine just how the water ever got in, but during the rebuilding, the air intake system was modified to make it less likely to happen again.

September, 1977, marked a very successful "boot" drive for Muscular Dystrophy, during which \$2,835.40 was collected. Outside of holding a City bus and passengers hostage until all gave to charity, no undue pressure was used on anyone!

Fire Prevention Week was celebrated with a demonstration of equipment at Holy Name School and a tour of the station by several hundred Gulfport Elementary School students.

The middle of the year saw some new equipment added to our inventory. Mutual Aid radio crystals were installed in No.

14 and No. 9 radios which gives us the ability to communicate with others on the Countywide Mutual Aid radio network. A Polaroid camera and a hydrocarbon gas detector were added to the equipment carried on No. 9 squad.

The Little Embers received our blessings again this year. Since our first participation in 1955, there has been only one year in which we did not sponsor a Little League team.

Large diameter hose is one of the very successful new concepts to arrive on the fire scene in later years. It is sometimes referred to as "an above-ground water main" and has the capability of providing a hydrant immediately in front of any building in town. Bids were opened November 27, for 110 feet of 5-inch hose, and would you believe, ten dollars per foot?

Our ladies, who provide us with coffee, Gatorade and water, not to mention moral support at our "condition red" emergencies, are some of our greatest supporters. They turn out under the same conditions we do and are exposed to some of the same dangers, too, so we honored them with a dinner at Seaman's Cove at Maximo Marina to show them our appreciation for their efforts.

We received and tested 1100 feet of 5-inch supply hose. Although the cost was in excess of \$10,000, it gives us the capability of placing the equivalent of a Class A fire hydrant in front of any house or business establishment in the City. It can deliver 1,000 gallons of water per minute 1,000 feet from a hydrant. Our standard operating procedure sends No. 14 engine directly to the scene with Squad No. 9 and then, upon instructions from the D.C. No. 10 engine, lays in the 5" supply, resulting in a smooth, efficient evolution.

The City contracted with Pinellas Ambulance Service for Advanced Life Support service at a cost of \$85,000 for the first year. This includes a new A.L.S. unit, supplies, paramedics, EMT's, etc. The City is to provide housing for them and the fire station was designated to fill this requirement. The Department was not overjoyed over this arrangement, fearing some conflict and inconvenience, but accepted it as something we could learn to live with. There were some minor problems and a set of house rules to control the situation were written and everything worked out. The paramedics are a fine group and the conflicts were held to a minimum.

Just before Christmas, Firefighter Mark Todsén's daughter Mandi died very suddenly after a minor virus infection had

evidently run its course. She was struck down by Reyes Syndrome when only 7 years of age. The Department immediately contributed \$50 to Reyes Syndrome Research Foundation in Mandi's memory and began plans for a Mandi Todsens Memorial Benefit for Reyes Syndrome Research. This tragedy came very, very close to all of us. She was Chief Mack Brooks' great-granddaughter.

Begun January 1980 and completed in April, 11 firefighters and officers took a Fire Safety Inspection course to enable us to upgrade our City Fire Prevention efforts. We will take an advanced Inspection course at a later date, hoping to achieve State Certification for a nucleus of an effective Fire Prevention Bureau.

February 29, 1980: a basketball game between the Tampa Bay Buccaneers and the City of Gulfport employees team was held at Boca Ciega High School gym. It was a benefit for Reyes Syndrome Research and was a Mandi Todsens Memorial event. Many members worked hard to put it together, there was a program with ads bought by many merchants and individuals, and with ticket sales included, the contribution to the fund was \$5,492.10. This was probably the most successful event ever sponsored by this Department.

We looked forward to the visit by the I.S.O. inspector for a long period of time and he finally arrived to make his evaluation of the fire combat capabilities, water system, alarm system, communications, etc., which form the basis for the insurance rating for the City upon which all insurance rates are based. I suppose that the problems of that day and the inspector arrived separately, but they might as well have been seat-mates on the same train! During his inspection tour we experienced two major water-line breaks which killed the water system in a large portion of the City and ruined the rest of the day as far as the inspection went. Next day he continued his efforts to inspect our system but just as he was going out in a fire truck with several firefighters to assist in checking hydrants and pressure, an alarm came in that a bomb was set to explode in the Gulfport Convalescent Center. We responded with all hands and the cook to the Convalescent Center, evacuated it 100%, then waited while a Bomb Search dog and handler searched the building. Meanwhile, the I.S.O. inspector sat in the truck very patiently, making no comment but observing everything. It was impossible to tell from his actions or expression just what impression we had made on him. The report came back



months later and we were relieved to retain the rating of 6 which we have held for many years. This is the best rating a city can attain with volunteer fire department.

We are now using the standard County color codes for our fire hydrants — green caps on the outlets mean it is Class A or will produce the best flow, orange is the next best, and red means “find another hydrant.” These are really relative, but a Class A hydrant will flow 1,000 gallons per minute or more.

At the suggestion of some of our lieutenants we have adopted and put into service a new procedure. We now have duty crews. These consist of two officers and five firefighters who carry pagers (Channel 25) and who are on call 6 p.m. to 6 a.m. Monday thru Friday, all day Saturday and Sunday, and holidays. They respond to all non-emergency, non-life-threatening calls such as dumpster fires, animal rescue, car fires, smoke odor complaints, trash fires . . . in other words, all routine nuisance calls are handled with seven men, two apparatus, and keeps the other 23 men and four trucks off the street. The duty time was originally two weeks duration but was soon changed to one week to accommodate the night-life plans of the younger men. Two weeks was quite a drag at that.

December 1, 1980: \$50 special donation from our recreation fund was sent to a family to provide Christmas dinner for 15 needy, retarded, handicapped children.

Early this year we received shipment of more equipment — 12 air bottles, valvage covers, boots and helmets. Some items were expendable, others add to our capability. Just a few years ago we had so few air bottles that we used all of them at a fire and waited two days without any at all until they were returned after being refilled.

Since our officers and men finished the course in fire and safety inspections, several inspectors have been inspecting commercial properties for regular fire and safety codes and also for C.O.'s (Certificates of Occupancy) before being granted a City Occupational License. Several men have days off during the week, while some can only volunteer their services on weekends. This has resulted in a poorly organized inspection program. Also, the task is much larger than anyone anticipated, so the whole program was re-organized, turned over to two lieutenants, Hensley and Kemerer, to organize and assign occupancies to be inspected. Mr. Shapiro, City Manager, directed that the inspections be made and that the City would pay a fee for a

regular inspection and re-inspection. Since that time, Saturday mornings and early afternoons have been devoted almost entirely by the whole group of ten men to the inspection program. The record of compliance by all of the business operators has been exceptional. The Department has established an effective Fire Prevention Bureau.

A member's handbook has been prepared for all prospective and active members. It explains the procedure for joining the Department and rules and regulations, our standard operating procedures, various handout sheets such as hydrant locations, alarm systems, etc. Also included is a left, right, and rear view of each apparatus with a diagram of equipment located on each piece. It has proven very useful, particularly with the new men.

All of our rookies are enrolled in Firemanship 101 offered by P.V.T.I. and taught by our old friend, Lt. Ken Ferqueron of S.P.F.D. If they apply themselves, Ken will make good firefighters out of them.

Ah, December, those wonderful holidays with too little and too much! Too little time to do, too little money to buy, too many activities to attend, too much to attend to, etc., etc. We had a Christmas tree lighting ceremony with Santa Claus on a fire engine with all his little elves, who look very much like Gulfport firefighters. Also we threw a Department Christmas party with plenty to eat, gifts for the children, and games for everyone. Sometimes we wonder why our children don't act like adults, and then the adults go to a party and act like six-year-olds — football, tag, and keep away!

Dave Fleisher has up until this time, and continues to adequately fill, Santa's shoes (not to mention his coat and breeches) and probably enjoys his role more than the children do, if that is possible. Just think, if Dave goes as long as "Dutch" did, he can keep this up for forty more years!

Five of our firefighters successfully completed a 112-hour Emergency Medical Technician course and, after taking the State of Florida exam, became State Certified E.M.T.'s. All of this takes some very special effort by people with very special qualities. Those men are Lt. Ron Kemerer, Lt. George Hensley, Lt. David Meares, Firefighter Brian Brooks and Pat Carney. They received the congratulations of their comrades for their efforts.

One of the great inventions which has been available to the Fire/Rescue Service is the hydraulic-powered spreader jaws,

cutters and rams, named the "Jaws of Life" by the Hurst Company. They were demonstrated to the Department on October 12 this year. Fire Fighters Equipment Co. of Jacksonville, Florida, was the successful bidder for this versatile, powerful, (and expensive) tool. The cost was in excess of \$8,000. We built a fire truck in 1963 for less than that!

Several members of the Department, having completed two training courses in Fire Prevention and Inspection, took the Florida State Certification exam. We have been doing inspections for some time, but the State requirements for certification have just been initiated and an examination approved to accomplish this end. Every one of Gulfport's candidates passed the State exam and promptly received their Certification. Those who are certified inspectors are Bill Brown, Ron Kemerer, George Hensley, Pat Carney, Walter Brooks, Rick Johnson, Richard Hand, Rick Pashkow, Ken Snelling, Nathan White, Dave Meares, Brian Brooks, and Mark Todsén.

Our people are to be complimented for their continued efforts to upgrade their skills and education. You will remember the men who attended the E.M.T. course and the State Inspector's Certification. Mike Blank, Richard Pashkow and George Lewis enrolled in the Minimum Standards course with P.V.T.I. and graduated a short time later. Congratulations are in order.

Problems seem to be attracted to one area like iron to a magnet. We wrote of a fire at 2526 York Street some years ago where five men were sent to the hospital suffering from heat exhaustion. Well, it happened again, at the same address! After the first fire, the house was demolished and replaced with a duplex. The house was well involved when we arrived, but was brought under control in good time. We had a few bad minutes when the neighbors insisted that a woman and a child were still in the house. Three separate intensive searches were made and there was no one there. The young lady had taken the child and left as a result of a domestic disturbance and was safe with her family. A thorough examination of the premises, however, revealed evidence of an accelerant. The State Fire Marshall's office was called in, evidence collected, and the State Attorney's office prosecuted the husband. After a three-day trial, the jury brought in a verdict of Guilty and he was sentenced to three years in prison. This is the second conviction for arson successfully prosecuted by the Department and the State Fire Marshal's Office.



Many great advances have been made over the years in firefighting equipment. Early fire hoses were made of leather, riveted into sleeves with no couplings, then linen and cotton hoses were woven, rubber lining added, and now plastic hose which is lighter, more flexible, doesn't need cleaning, won't knot, doesn't have to be dried. We hope to put this hose into use on all of our pre-connected lines on each pumper. The first pumper has been equipped with this new hose.

In connection with Fire Prevention Week every year, school children from several of the local elementary schools, private as well as public, come to the station to be entertained, lectured, and generally made aware of fire safety. I'm sure that it has been very effective over the years, and Capt. Hensley has usually taken the lead in this endeavor, being ably assisted by several volunteers, for which much credit is due. We have failed to mention one of the most interesting aspects of this up until now. When the kids go back to class, they always draw posters and decorate Thank You cards to send back to the Fire Department. (Some of them are half as big as bed sheets!) Don't sell these kids short. Their depth of perception is sometimes astonishing. They may draw a fire engine leaving off the wheels, but they put on the hoses, numbers, door handles, red light and siren and many details you didn't think they even noticed.

Ten weeks, three hours per session, one class per week: the first Responder course trained many of our firefighters, several wives, and some other interested individuals in advanced first aid, which will enhance our Paramedic-E.M.T. units with qualified first aid personnel able to assist them whenever necessary.

The Paramedic group, several of whom are also firefighters, asked for the assistance of the Fire Department in entertaining the Fire Department Training Officer's seminar which was held in the Gulfport station. The facilities of the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary on Osgood Point were offered and the Fire Department provided a fish fry for them. We also demonstrated a 5" hose lay and master stream evolution which turned out very well.

Something new has been added to the school children's fire station visit this year. We have purchased a set of puppets which, with recorded dialogue and music, puts the fire safety message across to the children everywhere. They loved it. The firemen who put on the show had a ball. They put as much

into it as they do fighting fires. We were blessed with the usual blizzard of Thank You notes, posters, and artwork from the classes involved.

— *Deputy Fire Chief Walter M. Brooks,  
Nathan White*

## THE POLICE DEPARTMENT PAST AND PRESENT

Law enforcement as we know it was, of course, unknown in early Gulfport. According to one source, when a law officer in St. Petersburg wanted someone from this area, he simply asked the trolley conductor to tell the man to go in since there was a warrant for his arrest. Another long-timer resident aptly put it that there was no need for either police or jail because people took care of one another and of their differences of opinion, one way or another!

Apparently Johnney Leigh was the lone first policeman, desk sargeant *and* Chief on Sundays and holidays or when important people like the golfer Bobby Jones came visiting. Then he had help, for example, from a motorcycle cop, Barney Atkinson White. With incorporation in 1910, a police "department" was established, but probably only one man was employed. Complaints arose — the neighbor's cows might be wandering on another's property, boys might be involved in a fist fight, or there could be a tavern brawl. Extra deputies were hired when needed.

The first Marshal was John C. White, appointed in 1910. A bond issue for \$4,000 was approved to build a town house and jail. Marshal White's job was comparatively simple. At one time he had to deliver utility bills on the last Saturday of each month!

By the early twenties there were disturbances of note. The *Evening Independent* printed an article about them and the story was at first vehemently denied until Mrs. Lucky, a resident, testified that they were correct. Within that year, three Marshals were hired, resigned or were replaced. Special police were often employed, and for reasons undisclosed in Council Minutes, the J. A. Detective Agency was hired for \$88.00. Fred Roberts resigned as Marshal 4/8/23 and Irving Slauter was named 5/15/23 but resigned 8/21/23 and John White was appointed. On 10/2/23 J. L. Nash was made a special police officer to enforce the dog control ordinance! In December, an ordinance prohibiting drunken driving was

passed. By 1925, a pistol and holster were furnished the Marshal. The next year, Sam Renney became Marshal and was the first to ride a motorcycle full-time (his own machine!). The jail was moved from Chase Park to City-owned lots in Veteran City subdivision located in the present City Hall complex.

In the economic pinch of the thirties, Council decided to ask the County Sheriff to make our Police Chief a Deputy of Pinellas County. The "blue laws" increased police duties and when they were rescinded, the auto was causing lots of activity — speeding limited to 15 miles per hour meant collection of many \$15 fines or 30 days in jail.

Old records are not available, but native sons remember — for example, Nathan L. White (who remembers practically everything). He talked a lot about Lloyd "Mout" Holland, a good man who handled this town full of commercial fishermen who liked to drink and brawl, but he had a way with even the toughest. A criminal one week might well be helping with another the next. He really had a work program going before it was the thing to do! He corrected the situation whether it was a family quarrel or a real tough problem. He was Chief when Nathan went into service in 1942, and when he came home four years later, Sullivan was Chief, then "Sandy" Sanderson, "Rudy" Roth, "Bill" Jopson, and then Golliner rose from the ranks. There has never been a scandalous situation here, he said, and many local men have served, including Norman Haines, French Bishop, Stutts Gilbert and others.

"Mout" wasn't what you'd expect a policeman to look like — neither tall nor husky, but he was very effective and deeply loved, especially by the boys he influenced by his example of fairness. Many stories focusing on his tenure can be heard when old-timers get together. "Jo" Pippin told how he tried to placard her house when the children had diptheria, but she stood her ground, would have none of that, and ordered him off her porch. He left, and Mr. Pippin kept on delivering milk, diptheria or not! They called him "Mout" because he kept saying "I mout lock you up or I mout not."

The jail was seldom locked, and often those put in to sleep it off would be gone by sunup. That didn't bother Mout's good wife, Alice, because the Chief had to feed his prisoners from his salary of \$12.50 a seven-day week! He also was allowed to pump five gallons of gas from the City tank weekly for his '35 Chevy. In spite of hard times, that salary



kept increasing until it became \$35.50 a week; but in 1934, salaries of both the Chief and the School Officer were abolished, along with salaries of City officials. Much police work at that time had to do with mortgage foreclosures and collection of delinquent taxes and boat slip rentals. A diary of 1941 shows many arrests but few sentences imposed by lenient judges.

The interview with Herman "Hap" Golliner, in July 1983, told us a lot about his memories and of how William C. Jopson was Chief when he joined the Police Department in 1959. Hap remembers hearing stories of how it had been before the Department became so well organized and equipped. It was once the custom, for instance, for the Marshal to light the water tower when he needed a cop, but the criminals/culprits knew that signal and would be long gone by the time the law arrived at the action scene. The Department had a 20'x20' room, a kerosene stove, no air alert system or rest room, and their old radio room is now enclosed in the new structure which houses the present Police Department.

They had three patrolmen, a sargeant, and the Chief. If any of them got confused finding their way back to the station from a call, they would use the water tower as their guide. Chief Jopson did a wonderful job, especially when the City Court tried all local violations. People would gather in front of the station and the windows were opened so pleading could take place. For the last five years all small City cases go to the County Court. Hap said a number of famous judges started here, including State Attorney Jim Russell, Seth Walker, Jack Dadswell, Harry Folwell, and others. Hap became Chief in 1971, and now the Department has thirty-one full-time staff qualified to meet Florida standards and more. Recruits are sent to training school to learn the laws, brought back to the station to work with a senior officer, and remain on probation for six months. All have retraining classes periodically. Academy and St. Petersburg Junior College courses are used extensively.

Today the Police Department is quite sophisticated with three computers. Now the officer knows who he is stopping and why before he gets out of his car! A criminal's record can be available to him in the matter of minutes. They used police dogs for a while, but they are expensive and it takes six weeks to train the man and his dog, plus the latter costs a lot to feed. Another expense with canine patrol is that

they usually ride one dog handler and dog to a car, and that is expensive, too. But it does give a better overall coverage to the area. Another problem with the dogs is that once one gets into poison, he won't put his nose down again!

Cities will rob one another to get a well-trained police officer — and that happens! Hap feels a call received should be answered carefully — here in Gulfport especially, because our population includes many retirees. It is true that some calls are peculiar, but they are important to the one making them. Police did all the rescue work before the Paramedics were trained and employed. He dispatches for all calls. He is proud that he asked for, and got, use of natural gas in the cars. It costs only 39¢ a gallon, but has a slower pick-up quality. The cars have to be adjusted for it, of course.

Income from fines goes to the City. Police receive a call about every 24 minutes, about what St. Petersburg does; but here that means more calls per man. He is proud that we have Neighborhood Crime Watch areas established in nearly all parts of our City. Most other communities charged each area for signs and all — but Gulfport paid all our costs.

Of course, traffic problems are steadily increasing with the extension of Interstate 275 and with exits leading cars through Gulfport on their routes to the beaches. Getting the public to cooperate with law enforcement is difficult, even though it is done for their benefit. Sometimes groups of kids get into trouble — four or five do not constitute a gang! Many here lose money early each month because, in spite of repeated warnings, they carry cash and often injuries are added to the crime of purse-snatching! People who think they can spend the night on our beach are sent elsewhere.

Several of his men are about due for retirement and, with the increase of population and problems, "Hap" is asking for an additional man as well as for replacements.

Yes, Gulfport used to be a "quiet little fishing village" with only two phones and no radio or television or any of the other attributes our City now offers those lucky enough to live here and like it! If you haven't visited our splendid Police Department, why don't you? Then you can see how well we are protected — often in spite of our carelessness — and how we can do more to support Gulfport's "finest."

— *Agnes Conron and  
Frances Purdy*

## POSTAL SERVICE

The following information is from the book, *Chronology of Florida Post Offices*, published by the Florida Federation of Stamp Clubs in 1962. I have been told that it took many years of research, locally and in Washington, and that it is highly accurate. Here are some facts from it:

Bonifacio — established May 10, 1880; discontinued April 6, 1883; reestablished January 5, 1885.

Disston City — name change October 16, 1889.

Veteran City — name change, July 10, 1906.

Gulfport — name change, December 27, 1910; discontinued, June 30, 1928 — mail service from St. Petersburg; reestablished April 15, 1937, as branch of St. Petersburg.

Quoting from *The Sea Breeze*, we learn the following about mail service in the early days. "The Postmaster General has ordered that a contract be made with Wm. C. Chase, of Baltimore, Md., for carrying mail in safe and suitable steamboats, from Tampa to Ellenton, six times per week return, with side supply to Pinellas and Bonifacio three times per week and return, from July 1st, 1886, to June 20th, 1887. Deliver the mail accordingly, and report date of commencement of service." (6/15/86) "Mr. Chase has thrown up his contract for carrying mail by steamboat, so that we shall get only two mails a week . . . and will have to depend upon a sail-boat to bring it. However, as Capt. Williams has one of the fastest sharpies in these waters, our mail service is still more satisfactory than at many other places on the coast." (7/1/86)

"Mr. Torres has moved one of his houses down near his store, and has moved the Post Office into it, and very good quarters it is too." (12/1/86) "Steps are being taken towards changing of the name of our town and Post Office, and we hope that something more satisfactory than the present condition of things will be arrived at." (2/1/87)

"*The Cherub* after making a few trips to Tampa with the mail, drew off, and the sloop *Sneezer*, Captain Brown, has been making the regular trips ever since. We think that Capt. Whitehurst did not treat the people here quite right in this matter." (3/1/87) "Our mail boat has been making prompt time of late. We guess about equal to the Pinellas boat." (4/1/87), and more the same date.



"So we are to have a Money Order Office at last. Postmaster Torres has received favorable word from the Department, and all that is necessary now is for him to give security for a certain amount and forward the same to Washington, when the necessary papers will be sent him. The article on the second page was in print before we knew anything of the above" AND "Our mail facilities are not what they ought to be. We need a Money Order Office on the Point badly, and in order to obtain such, a certain amount of mail must pass through the office. We are informed that some people are in the habit of sending their letters to Tampa . . . whether because they dislike the Postmaster or the mail carrier . . . a word to the wise, etc."

Joseph Torres, emigre from Louisiana, fought with Maximilian in Mexico, settled here, bought land from Barnett and another 169 acres from the State. He served as Postmaster in 1885. According to [infor on one of] Irving Slaughter's [tapes], a Mary McRoberts was Postmistress in 1905 and the Post Office was in her home at about 56th Street and 27th Avenue. When the Gulf Casino was finished in 1906, the Post Office moved into it. Mail was brought in and out from St. Petersburg by the trolleys. There were nine families here then. Later, from December 27, 1910, Clara B. Giger was in charge of mails brought in from St. Petersburg, until Walter O. Brooks took it over in 1914.

Because he could not tolerate winters in Tennessee, Mr. Brooks brought his family to Florida in 1913 and settled here where there were perhaps fifty or more people living. He built his house on the southeast corner of 30th Avenue and 55th Street S. during October-November, 1925. A part of it housed a grocery store and a fourth-class Post Office. On the south side was a real estate office — Brooks and Swift — and on the east, on 30th Avenue, was a barbershop. Mr. Brooks was appointed Postmaster and served until the office was abolished by Hoover in 1928. He moved his original building to the back lot facing 30th Avenue in 1925, and Holiday Inn was built on the corner. The northwest corner of the Inn verandah was used as an outdoor Post Office because Brooks built window boxes with combination locks to keep people from waking him at night to get mail. Later, the main Post Office in St. Petersburg also built outdoor boxes. Mail came twice daily by trolley, was taken off by the Brooks family (usually) at 30th Avenue, and the other bag went on to the Pier and off to the boat to Pass-A-Grille where "Ruchee"

Steinwinder was the Postmistress. Both the first Post Office and Holiday Inn are now used as apartments.

Mail delivery since has come from St. Petersburg, for home delivery in boxes on the street in some locations, on the house in others, or to boxes in the Beach Bazaar. For several years we had twice daily delivery. Mr. and Mrs. Richard Barter ran the Bazaar from 1953 to 1973, and since then Mr. and Mrs. "Jack" Auman bought it from "Chuck" Anger in 1978 or so, who had taken over from Mrs. Toni ??? who ran it a short time. At present, as then, the general variety store is the larger portion of the building, but full governmental mail service is available in the rear. With the present growth of Gulfport, shall we once more appeal and get our own Post Office and the privilege of postmarking our mails?

It was helpful to talk about this article with Mrs. Sydney Brooks who remembered some whimsies — her father-in-law got permission to cut through the Pier floor to permit him to build steps down into the water. He went fishing many mornings, got enough flounder or mago snapper for lunch every time he went! He was deathly afraid of dogs, and since he had to deliver special delivery letters (cost 10 cents), he carried a long pole to fight any canine attackers who might leap for his throat. Mrs. Brooks said that lots of mail would be addressed to "Mr. and Mrs. Brooks" and they would know which of the five Brooks' families it was meant for by checking the postmark — Michigan would be for W. L., Tennessee for W.O., etc.

Mrs. Brooks remembered that there were no sidewalks, only boards laid upon cross-boards lining Beach Boulevard, and the water came up then to 30th Avenue, even without heavy rains. She described spear fishing and said also that all "Florida Crackers used gigs on long poles." She can still visualize the little boats all over the Bay catching trout and many other kinds of fish with gigs. These and others are now only dreams in the minds of those who recall former days.

### **Bonifacio:**

In and out mail from 5/10/80 to 4/6/83 was by the Cedar Key steamboats. I have no idea why it was discontinued on April 6, 1883. Those Cedar Key boats were still running. The reestablish date of January 5, 1885, coincides with the arrival of the first railroad at Tampa on January 1, 1885.

— Sydney Brooks,  
Willard B. Simonds,  
and Others

## POSTMASTERS

### GULFPORT OFFICIAL POST OFFICES – 1880-1928

#### BONIFACIO

Joseph R. Torres . . . . .	10 May 1880
(discontinued 6 April 1883)	
Joseph R. Torres . . . . .	5 January 1885
George W. Anderson . . . . .	30 June 1885
May Turner . . . . .	26 June 1888
Richard L. Locke . . . . .	5 February 1889
NAME CHANGED 16 OCTOBER 1889	

#### DISSTON CITY

Richard L. Locke . . . . .	16 October 1889
Alonzo A. Hoyt . . . . .	5 May 1887
William B. Catlin . . . . .	16 March 1898
Ogden Ingersol . . . . .	9 May 1899
William P. Woodworth . . . . .	11 December 1899
NAME CHANGED 10 JULY 1906	

#### VETERAN CITY

Alonzo A. Hoyt . . . . .	10 July 1906
Malcolm McRoberts . . . . .	26 March 1908
Clara B. Giger . . . . .	12 October 1910
NAME CHANGED 27 DECEMBER 1910	

#### GULFPORT

Clara B. Giger . . . . .	27 December 1910
Walter O. Brooks . . . . .	24 October 1913
DISCONTINUED 30 JUNE 1928	

## PRINTED WORDS

Disston City will forever hold the distinction of having had the first newspaper on the Pinellas peninsula south of Clearwater. Disston City's newspaper, *The Sea Breeze*, was first published April 1, 1886. (The *West Hillsboro Times* had been published in Dunedin and Clearwater starting in 1884. In 1892 it was moved to St. Petersburg and became the *St. Petersburg Times*.)

A number of years ago, Society member Willard B. Simonds, with the help of the then President of the St. Petersburg Historical Society, Everett Lehnert, located a complete set of original copies of *The Sea Breeze* in the SPHS archives. They were yellowed, faded, and brittle with almost a hundred years of age; but it was possible to make copies. Complete sets of these copies, with an introduction by Mr. Simonds, can be read at the Museum, and can be purchased. Mr. Simonds' introduction reads in part:

"W. J. (Will) McPherson, founder and editor of *The Sea*



*Breeze*, was one of three sons of Elias B. McPherson who had homesteaded 168 acres of today's St. Petersburg Beach in 1885. Besides *The Sea Breeze*, the McPhersons, father and sons, operated a job printing business, a lumber yard, a contracting business, and a general business agency — all in Disston City. Besides all of that activity, the father, Elias B., was Superintendent of the Disston City Sunday School.

"W. J. McPherson was assisted in publication of *The Sea Breeze* by G. W. Bennett, 'a veteran newspaperman,' and there are indications that his father, Elias, also had a hand in the publication.

"The Disston City of the 1880's was no metropolis, but it was the largest settlement on the lower Pinellas peninsula, with a population of about 150. These people were farmers, fishermen, small merchants, skilled tradesmen, and a sprinkling of real estate agents. The three earliest arrivals had acquired their land by homesteading; later arrivals had to purchase their land from one of the Hamilton Disston land companies or from one of the homesteaders.

"During its one year of existence, *The Sea Breeze* carried no news of earth-shaking importance. Its 17 issues did chronicle the daily comings and goings of the people of the entire lower peninsula — the events which were of importance in their daily lives. Thus, perusing it can give us some idea of life in pioneer Pinellas County."

One of Gulfport's most important features is its *Gabber*, and on June 9, 1984, George Brann was asked to tell his story about how he started it in October, 1968. At that time he was engaged in Goodyear Warehouse distributorship in the location of the present *Gabber*. "Young Bob Sargent came and asked for work which I could not offer him, but when he persisted, I decided I could start a 'shopper' and let him run it." "It" was a mimeographed sheet and didn't make any money, but George started another business to help support Bob and the paper which they named to indicate it would contain news of interest to readers. Ads were free at first, but then they got \$2.25 for them — card size they were. The first issue had 200 copies and about 150 were picked up. One night George went to Council meeting, listened, and went back to the office to write up what happened. From then on, the paper grew. Council meetings were dominated by one person while others said nothing, and that intrigued readers about as much as did the decisions they made. George felt residents should know what was going on — NEWS - PAPER

— a paper of news! Bob couldn't make it, so he returned to Connecticut and George gave up other business concerns to work alone, as he prefers, on the *Gabber*. He wrote, "It will come out every week, even if it has to come on a postcard." He gave up his flying over five counties to distribute merchandise for Goodyear and instead plugged away to establish this paper which defies most rules for journalism but which remains a deeply respected and enjoyed weekly treat. It was still a mimeographed sheet, but in 1970 George published 500 copies and had none left over, so he bought a printing press (about which he knew nothing!). He called Palmer Paper in Tampa and said that he would buy a Davidson press if they would bring it over, set it up, and show him how to run it.

They ran off about a dozen copies; George could do it and still use his regular typewriter. He soon learned how to make columns. Ads were only business-card size and still cost only \$2.25. He needed a camera so made one out of a cardboard box with floodlights on glass weighted down to make contact. Soon he had to get an electric typewriter — an IBM Executive — for about \$70. The paper at last began to cover itself — it paid for only supplies for nearly two years! Then, when George cleared \$100 a week, he bought a camera, dark room gear, a folding machine, and a magnifier — that was late in 1970.

One Monday, the press broke down and George had absolutely no way to keep his promise to get the paper out on Thursday. Father Goodman dropped in to visit, heard his dilemma, and told him he would take care of "his department" if George would go out back and try to rig up some repairs while he thought about how he could proceed. He got an inspiration, called Orlando and told them he'd buy a new press if they would come and do whatever they could to get his press running in time to meet his publication date. They did — even took off the back door to get the new machine in. There was no stopping the *Gabber* after that! In fact, it was doing so well that George decided he'd better sell rather than kill himself with overwork, and he did, five years ago this month [June 1984] when circulation had grown from 200 to 550 copies. It's much higher now. In his day, the total operation took place in that one place, but now printing is done outside.

George cited several instances of reforms in city government in which he believes he had a distinct role because he always told the truth in his paper about what was being done

by Council. That reputation was built and maintained — that his purpose was to write what was factual. He never had to solicit ads, always thanked people for their help, and put the importance of people served over other considerations. The *Gabber* was never in business to make money but primarily to print news. “Gulfport has been awfully good to me, and I’m here in Pasadena now only because of location,” said George. “I take care of Gulfport still and they support me — they let me buy all this gear and I’m grateful.”

George, a most modest man, came here from Gardiner, Maine, six miles south of Augusta, and has lived either in the Disston area or at his present home many years.

Then we talked with Ted and Elsie Haveness, present owners and editors, to find out how they have changed operation, quantity of copies and their distribution — while maintaining the aim to tell the truth about what is happening in our City. On June 20, 1984, it was about five years since they had acquired the paper. Circulation, now about 7,000 weekly, has grown because of increased locations. The weekly has grown to 24-32 pages, and advertisers call in for space from further distances, including many parts of St. Petersburg and Pasadena. Ted leaves copies at Pasadena Shopping Center and other heavily-trafficked stores, and new readers keep popping up. Sixteen pages used to be maximum but even in summer they do 24 pages or more.

Ted said that Elsie was the one who urged their purchase — She’d been in circulation work in New Jersey for 18 years and never got it out of her blood. Ted knew nothing about printing, but respecting Elsie’s judgment, agreed the offer was too good to pass up. All he knew, he said, was the “aggravation and long hours” — but he has learned a lot more since.

The press was temperamental and learning how to use it was not easy. Now the Havenesses send their paper out to Sun and Fun, Clearwater, and the type is clearer and they can breathe on Fridays! At first, while they published Wednesdays, 20 pages meant four to a sheet, 5,000 copies stacked all around the room while they and a student after school collated, folded and all, taking well over five hours of hard work to get it ready — really rough work! They had to print Fridays, Saturdays, and often Sundays too — but they always got the paper out on Thursdays.

Ted and Elsie still have the Davidson press Brann bought, but it is used only in emergencies. They also have George’s old printer, but it is on the front desk for you to see if you



visit their office at 1419 49th Street S. They don't do any other printing but the *Gabber*. They maintain the original goal — to print news, not to journalize. They hope that inserts by former and present Gulfport residents will support concerns for proper values. Irate letter-writers are often cooled down, but only if they ask for and take advice!

May our City always have devoted newspaper people!

— Willard B. Simonds,  
Frances Purdy

## STREETS AND NEAR BANKRUPTCY

Gulfport today has over fifty miles of streets, all paved except for a very few blocks. That paving has been accomplished during two periods of time: 1924 through 1927; and since 1947. The paving during the 1924-27 period was the direct result of the great Florida Land Boom of the late 1920's, and when that boom collapsed early in 1928, trying to meet the financial obligations resulting from that paving almost bankrupted the town.

Walter Fuller, in *St. Petersburg and Its People*, Chapter XXIII, says in part.

"It is impossible to tell when the rapid growth — of the 1921-1925 period became sky blue promotion, and not growth. Two events, more than perhaps all others combined, triggered the boom. One, promotion and construction of Gandy Bridge . . . *The second headline event starred I. M. (Handsome Jack) Taylor, promoter of Pasadena Estates. . . .*" (Italicizing ours.)

And, most of Pasadena Estates, including its star attractions, the Rolyat Hotel and the Pasadena Golf Course, was within the town limits of Gulfport! Of course, there were other developments in Gulfport, and many new residents bought lots, built homes, and moved in — almost entirely south of Gulfport Blvd. and close to the trolley line.

While the boom lasted it seems everybody had "land fever." Lots were sold and resold at ever increasing prices, usually with very little cash, but heavy mortgages were involved. Apparently, just about everybody, including the Gulfport Town Council members, came to believe that it would never end. But end it did, early in 1928! Pasadena Estates, the Rolyat, and the golf course were thrown into bankruptcy and Taylor disappeared. Most of the other

development companies suffered the same fate. Land values dropped to almost nothing, lot purchasers by the hundreds defaulted on their mortgages and tax payments. The lots were repossessed and many of the mortgage holders, now stuck with hundreds of almost worthless lots, went into bankruptcy.

During the height of the boom, various Gulfport Town Councils paved over twenty miles of streets at a cost of almost \$1½-million. About four miles of this paving was in the Pasadena Estates section; most of the rest was south of Gulfport Blvd. All of the paving was paid for by issuing municipal bonds, backed by the "full faith and credit" of the town, and with arrangements made to make the required principal and interest payments from assessments placed against each lot on the paved streets. Apparently no one had the slightest doubt but that land values would continue increasing and that the lot owners would have no trouble making those assessment payments which ran from about \$200 to well over \$600 per lot.

By the end of 1927, successive Town Councils had pledged payment of about \$90,000 in interest and almost \$150,000 in principal payments each year for about the following ten years. But owners of defaulted lots and bankrupt development and mortgage companies do not pay paving assessments — or taxes!

That was the situation from 1928 until about 1930. The town was struggling but apparently making ends meet. The southern part of Gulfport, with a firmer base of residential and business development, apparently remained reasonably prosperous.

Then the effects of the great national depression which followed the stock market crash of 1929 began to be felt. The man who had a regular job became a rarity. Most Gulfport residents were reduced to subsisting on fishing, hunting, and home-grown vegetables. Cash money became a very scarce commodity. The result: almost nobody could pay those paving assessments, or taxes, and the owners of the bonds were getting upset about not receiving their interest or principal payments.

Just how bad things were is shown by some of the economy measures instituted by Town Councils during this period:

- ★ Cut out all street lighting.
- ★ Cut out all lighting at City Parks.

- ★ Cut out all City telephones, except one each in City Hall, the Fire Station, and the Police Station.
- ★ The Police Chief, and all other City Officials, to serve without pay.
- ★ All City employees to take one half of their pay in scrip which could be used to pay their taxes.
- ★ Try to borrow money from the State to make some much needed repairs to City equipment.

In the mid-1930's, Mr. Dixie M. Hollins, a dealer or broker in municipal bonds and who had become owner of Pasadena Gulf Course with its associated land, arranged a refinancing scheme which satisfied the bond holders and gave the City a "breathing spell" in which to get its financial house in order. With this help, and with the general recovery from the Depression, Gulfport struggled through.

But no more paving projects were undertaken until 1947, and since then there has been some paving almost every year as needs required. In addition, many of the 1924-27 period streets have required repaving, some with and some without widening. But financing is quite different, with no more paving on credit, municipal bonds, or otherwise. These costs are now paid from a Capital Improvement Fund, and as the lot owners pay their assessments, that money goes back into the fund, making a type of revolving paving fund.

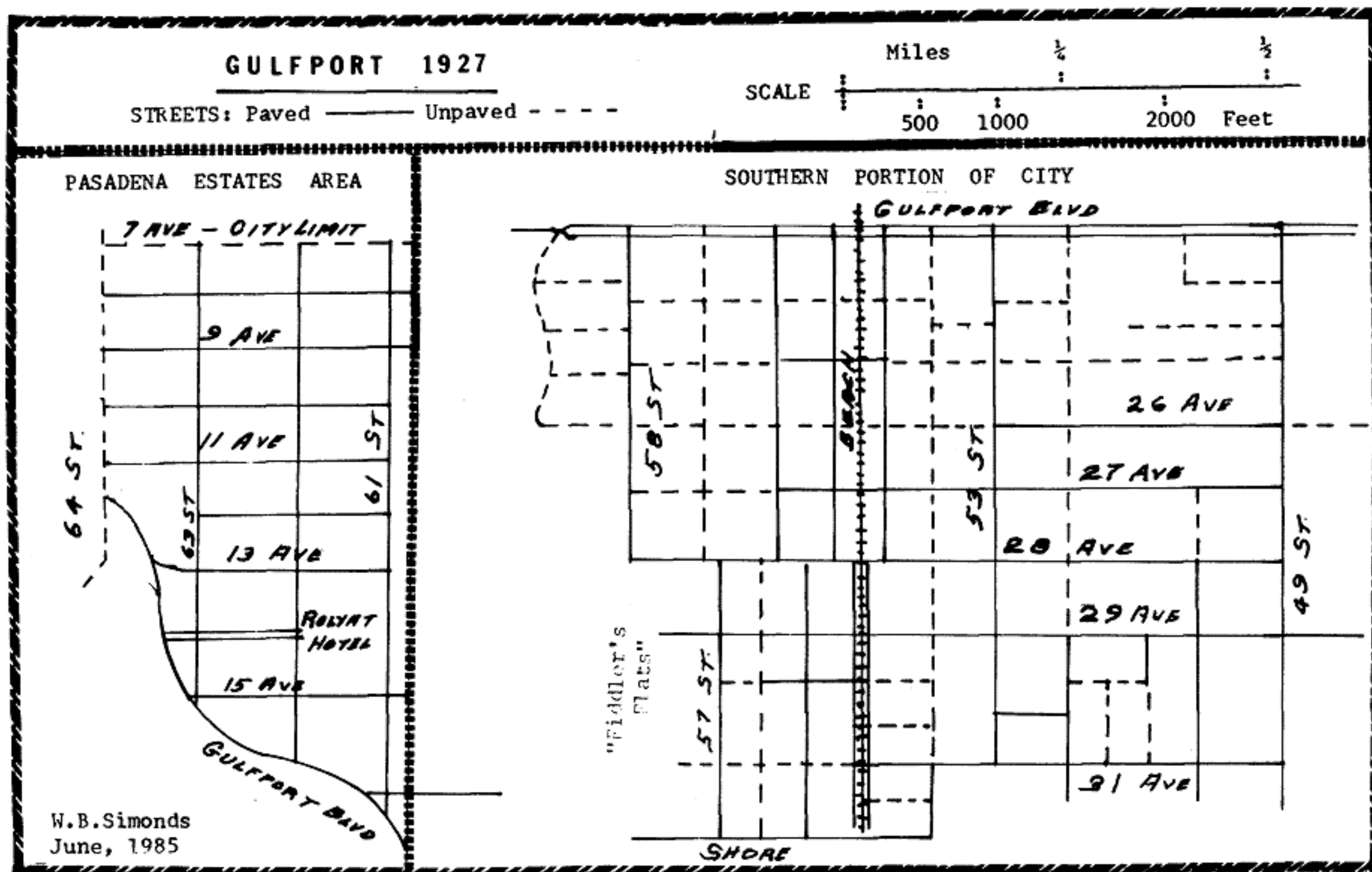
All of the paving of the 1920's was with brick. Unfortunately, as repaving has been required, the old bricks have been covered over with asphalt. This has totally destroyed the ability of the brick streets to get rid of storm water by soaking through the bricks into the soil. But it has become impossible to find people today who can, or will, lay paving bricks at any price!

Because of their catastrophic effect, and because they did result in paving about one-fourth of the streets of today's Gulfport, we are including the following tabulation of the 1920's paving project. Appendix A lists all of the streets which were paved during this period, and the map following shows most of them.

*Note:* On February 21, 1928, the City Council changed the names of almost all of Gulfport's streets to conform to the St. Petersburg street-numbering-and-naming system. Appendix B provides cross-references between present and original street names. Throughout this article, today's names are used.







Tangerine Avenue was hard-rolled shell from 49th to 55th Streets. Otherwise, whatever streets existed in the area were trails opened up by the various grove and dairy farm operators.

Space considerations prevented including on the map the area east of 49th Street and north of Clam Bayou (26th Avenue to 29th Avenue and 44th Street to 49th Street). In this area, 29th Avenue was paved, as were most of the north-south streets from 26th Avenue (unpaved) to 29th Avenue.

We believe that the paved streets on the map are shown with a good degree of accuracy, but some of the unpaved streets may have existed only as trails or as footpaths.

A new book, published in 1984, *Fifty Feet in Paradise — The Booming of Florida*, by David Nolan, discusses the causes and effects of all of Florida's boom-bust periods starting in 1821. Nolan devotes a large part of his book to the biggest boom-bust of all: that which almost bankrupt Gulfport in the late 1920's. While the book includes little detail of the St. Petersburg area, the causes and effects of that boom-bust here were no different from those in the Tampa, Sarasota, or Miami areas, all of which are discussed in considerable detail in Nolan's book.

As an interesting sidelight, no streets at all existed in the area west of 57th Street and south of 29th Avenue until about 1957. This area and the adjacent Town Shores site was a tidal swamp, known locally as "Fiddler's Flats." The taped memories of some of our old-timers tell us that these Flats were used as the town dump during the early years of the century. In the late 1950's and early 1960's, Dixie Hollins, owner of the Town Shores site, seawalled and filled the area, and 58th Street, 30th and 31st Avenues, and Shore Blvd. were built into the area.

So much for street paving within Gulfport. Vehicular access into and out of the City, until about 1924, was not much different from that of the early years of the century, as discussed in the chapter on "Transportation." From the east, Lakeview and Tangerine had been shelled, as had been 49th Street from the north.

In 1924, Lakeview and its extension through Gulfport — Gulfport Blvd. — was paved as far west as 64th Street. And 49th Street from the north was paved through from Central Avenue to the Bay in 1927. There is no record that any part of Tangerine Avenue was paved before 1948. In 1924, a new access road from the north, 64th Street, was opened by the



Pasadena Estates developers, but it was not paved until 1959. In 1927, 62nd Street was paved south to Gulfport Blvd. and may have been open through from Central Avenue since 1924. (If there was a vehicular bridge across Bear Creek at 62nd Street, it has long since been removed and replaced with a footbridge.) Our other access road from the north, 58th Street, did not even exist between 6th Avenue and 11th Avenue until the mid-1950's, and records show it was paved in 1967.

Although the area west of 64th Street was within the Gulfport City Limits until the mid-1930's, there were no roads into that area, which for the most part was tidal mud flats. Most of it is now within the City of South Pasadena. In 1926, the County started construction of the Corey Causeway and Bridge to St. Petersburg Beach. As its part of that project, Gulfport paved Pasadena Avenue from its City Limits at about today's Date Palm Avenue to the Corey bridgehead, and Gulfport Blvd. from its then end at 64th Street to the junction with Pasadena Avenue. This work is included in the tabulation as the 4/19/27 project.

*Sources:* City records from the 1920's are sadly lacking in detail, and much material is missing. (If the City Clerks of those days did, in fact, record it!) Most of the material in this article was derived from old maps, copies of 1920's Council Resolutions, and tabulations of those resolutions filed in the office of Mr. L. T. McCarthy, City Superintendent, with much help from Tim.

Some other information came from the Council Minutes of the years in question, located in the office of the City Clerk.

Also, Allan Fougstead provided some information.

— Willard B. Simonds

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#### NOTES TO APPENDIX A (facing page)

<sup>1</sup> Applied only to west side of 49th St. - St. Petersburg paved the east half.

<sup>2</sup> Each of these items largely duplicated item immediately above. They were probably cancelled and rescheduled at the later date shown.

<sup>3</sup> Total cost of this street, assessment figures not available.

\*Dual lanes with median strip.

NA - Not Available.

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## APPENDIX A

### STREETS PAVED 1924-1927

Street	From - To	Project	Length (feet)	Assessment (\$ per ft.)
Beach Blvd.	Gulfport Blvd. - 28th Ave.	4-5-24	1980*	NA
	28th Ave. - Shore	4-5-24	1697	NA
Delette St.	52nd St. - 53rd St.	3-15-27	377	8.88
Gulfport Blvd.	49th St. - 51st St.	9-22-25	566*	3.57
	51st St. - 59th St.	9-22-25	3066*	8.52
	59th St. - 64th St.	9-22-25	4950	13.89
Shore Blvd.	54th St. - 58th St.	3-15-27	1037	6.41
Tifton St.	26th Ave. - 29th Ave.	3-15-27	1226	4.86
Upton St.	26th Ave. - 29th Ave.	3-15-27	1226	4.86
8th Ave.	61st St. - 64th St.	4-19-27	1650	NA
9th Ave.	58th St. - 64th St.	4-19-27	3771	4.99
10th Ave.	49th St. - 51st St.	9-22-25	1509	NA
	61st St. - 64th St.	4-19-27	1650	4.01
11th Ave.	61st St. - 64th St.	4-19-27	1650	4.30
12th Ave.	61st St. - 63rd St.	4-19-27	1037	4.24
13th Ave.	61st St. - Gulfport Blvd.	4-19-27	1414	4.32
14th Ave.	62nd St. - Gulfport Blvd.	4-19-27	707*	6.36
15th Ave.	49th St. - Gulfport Blvd.	9-22-25	7260	9.72
17th Ave.	60th St. - Gulfport Blvd.	4-19-27	660	6.18
20th Ave.	49th St. - 53rd St.	9-22-25	1226	9.91
25th Ave.	55th St. - 56th St.	9-22-25	283	8.28
26th Ave.	49th St. - 53rd St.	9-22-25	1677	7.97
27th Ave.	49th St. - 56th St.	9-22-25	3017	8.41
28th Ave.	49th St. - 58th St.	4-15-24	4431	8.86
29th Ave.	46th St. - 49th St.	3-15-27	660	9.08
	49th St. - 53rd St.	3-15-27	1697	9.08
	53rd St. - 58th St.	3-15-27	2169	11.06
30th Ave.	55th St. - Clinton	4-15-27	566	NA
31st Ave.	49th St. - 55th St.	3-15-27	2451	6.63
46th St.	26th Ave. - 29th Ave.	3-15-27	1226	4.86
47th St.	26th Ave. - 29th Ave.	3-15-27	1226	4.86
48th St.	26th Ave. - 29th Ave.	3-15-27	1226	4.86
49th St.	7th Ave. - 26th Ave.	3-15-27	6411	8.14 <sup>1</sup>
	26th Ave. - Bay	3-15-27	2357	8.45
50th St.	28th Ave. - Bay	4-15-24	1886	NA
51st St.	28th Ave. - 30th Ave.	5-24-27	613	6.91
52nd St.	30th Ave. - Shore Blvd.	9-22-25	943	9.14
53rd St.	Gulfport Blvd. - 28th Ave.	4-15-24	1980	NA
	28th Ave. - 31st Ave.	4-15-24	1414	NA
	11th Ave. - 30th Ave.	9-22-25	6694	6.73 <sup>2</sup>
54th St.	31st Ave. - Shore Blvd.	4-15-24	566	NA
55th St.	19th Ave. - Gulfport Blvd.	6-5-24	950*	NA
56th St.	28th Ave. - Shore Blvd.	4-15-24	1697	NA
	Gulfport Blvd. - 28th Ave.	4-15-24	1980	NA
	15th Ave. - 28th Ave.	7-21-25	3677	7.77 <sup>2</sup>
57th St.	28th Ave. - Shore Blvd.	9-22-25	1698	9.15
58th St.	15th Ave. - 28th Ave.	9-22-25	3677	10.48
61st St.	7th Ave. - Gulfport Blvd.	4-19-27	3207	32,033 <sup>3</sup>
62nd St.	7th Ave. - Gulfport Blvd.	4-19-27	3064	5.92
63rd St.	7th Ave. - Gulfport Blvd.	4-19-27	2734	19,282 <sup>3</sup>
<i>Outside of Present City Limits</i>				
Gulfport Blvd.	64th St. - Pasadena Ave.	3-17-27	6072	41,127 <sup>3</sup>
Pasadena Ave.	City Limit - Corey Bridge (Date Palm)	3-17-27	7128	48,238 <sup>3</sup>

## APPENDIX B

### STREET NAME CHANGES

On February 21, 1928, the City Council adopted a resolution changing the names of most of the then existing streets in the City to conform to the St. Petersburg numbering and naming system. The following lists provide cross references between Gulfport's original and present street names. The first list is indexed by today's street names, the second by the original names.

Both lists are arranged by (1) alphabetically by named streets; (2) numerically by avenues; and (3) numerically by streets. One name change made at a later date has been added and some changes involving streets not now within the City limits are included.

### PRESENT — ORIGINAL STREET NAMES As Changed February 21, 1928

Present Name	From (between)	To	Original Name
Clinton St.	28th Ave.	Shore Blvd.	Wendell Ave.
Dellett Ave.	52nd St.	53rd St.	Delett Prkwy.
	53rd St.	West to alley	Havana Ct.
	54th St.	Beach Blvd.	Bay View Pl.
Du Pont St.	28th Ave.	Shore Blvd.	Seminole Ave.
Essex Ave.	54th St.	Beach Blvd.	Washington Pl.
Freemont St.	7th Ave.	15th Ave.	Espana St.
Gray St.	7th Ave.	Tangerine Ave.	60th St.
Gulfport Blvd.	49th St.	59th St.	Lakeview Ave.
	59th St.	64th St.	Gulfview Ave.
Jersey Ave.	52nd St.	55th St.	17th St.
Hull St.	7th Ave.	17th Ave.	61st St.
Newton Ave.	49th St.	57th St.	12th Ave.
Preston Ave.	51st St.	52nd St.	Patton St.
Quincy St.	26th Ave.	Boca Ciega Bay	Unnamed
Tifton St.	26th Ave.	29th Ave.	Del Rio Ave.
Upton St.	26th Ave.	29th Ave.	Buena Vista Ave.
York St.	11th Ave.	15th Ave.	Torres Ave.
	Tangerine Ave.	20th Ave.	Rose Ct.
	30th Ave.	31st Ave.	Torres Ave.
7th Ave.	61st St.	64th St.	9th Ave.
8th Ave.	49th St.	55th St.	9th Ave.
	61st St.	64th St.	10th Ave.
9th Ave.	49th St.	55th St.	10th Ave.
	58th St.	64th St.	11th Ave.
10th Ave.	49th St.	51st St.	11th Ave.
	52nd St.	55th St.	11th Ave.
	61st St.	64th St.	12th Ave.
11th Ave.	49th St.	57th St.	16th Ave.
	57th St.	64th St.	13th Ave.
12th Ave.	49th St.	57th St.	15th Ave.
	57th St.	58th St.	14th Ave.
	61st St.	63rd St.	14th Ave.



13th Ave.	49th St.	57th St.	14th Ave.
	57th St.	Gulfport Blvd.	15th Ave.
14th Ave.	49th St.	57th St.	13th Ave.
	57th St.	58th St.	16th Ave.
	62nd St.	Gulfport Blvd.	16th Ave.
15th Ave.	49th St.	57th St.	11th St.
	57th St.	Gulfport Blvd.	17th Ave.
16th Ave.	51st St.	58th St.	Seminole St.
17th Ave.	49th St.	58th St.	10th St.
	60th St.	Gulfport Blvd.	Flora Ave.
18th Ave.	49th St.	51st St.	Blackberry St.
	51st St.	West to ?	Pine St.
	52nd St.	58th St.	Parkview St.
	59th St.	Gulfport Blvd.	Parkview St.
19th Ave.	59th St.	60th St.	Oleander St.
	52nd St.	58th St.	Oleander St.
20th Ave.	49th St.	Gulfport Blvd.	9th St.
21st Ave.	52nd St.	58th St.	Pinehurst St.
23rd Ave.	49th St.	51st St.	Curn Ave.
	52nd St.	53rd St.	7th St.
	53rd St.	54th St.	Hover Pl.
	54th St.	59th St.	7th St.
24th Ave.	49th St.	York St.	Harding Ave.
	53rd St.	54th St.	7th St.
	58th St.	59th St.	Donbeya Ave.
25th Ave.	49th St.	59th St.	6th St.
26th Ave.	49th St.	59th St.	5th St.
27th Ave.	49th St.	59th St.	4th St.
	58th St.	59th St.	Persea St.
28th Ave.	46th St.	58th St.	3rd St.
	58th St.	59th St.	Crescent Dr.
29th Ave.	46th St.	58th St.	2nd St.
30th Ave.	51st St.	52nd St.	Oak St.
	52nd St.	East to alley	Fairchild Ct.
	53rd St.	East to alley	Curtis Pl.
	53rd St.	West to alley	Shore View Ct.
	54th St.	58th St.	Bon Air St.
31st Ave.	48th St.	59th St.	1st St.
44th St.	26th Ave.	Boca Ciega Bay	Palm St.
46th St.	26th Ave.	29th Ave.	Grove Ave.
47th St.	26th Ave.	29th Ave.	Florida Ave.
48th St.	26th Ave.	29th Ave.	Bedford Ave.
49th St.	7th Ave.	Boca Ciega Bay	Disston Ave.
50th St.	27th Ave.	Boca Ciega Bay	Palm Ave.
51st St.	11th Ave.	23rd Ave.	Palmetto Ave.
	29th Ave.	31st Ave.	Live Oak Ave.
52nd St.	7th Ave.	Boca Ciega Bay	Pinellas Ave.
53rd St.	7th Ave.	Boca Ciega Bay	Lee Ave.
54th St.	7th Ave.	Shore Blvd.	Grant Ave.
57th St.	11th Ave.	Shore Blvd.	Egmont Ave.
58th St.	7th Ave.	Boca Ciega Bay	DeSota Ave.
59th St.	Gulfport Blvd.	26th Ave.	Lakeview Ave.
	25th Ave.	28th Ave.	Buhinia Dr.
60th St.	7th Ave.	Gulfport Blvd.	Casuarina Dr.
61st St.	7th Ave.	Gulfport Blvd.	62nd St.
62nd St.	7th Ave.	Gulfport Blvd.	63rd St.
63rd St.	7th Ave.	13th Ave.	64th St.
64th St.	7th Ave.	Gulfport Blvd.	65th St.

**Name Changed at a later date**

Beach Blvd.	Gulfport Blvd.	Shore Blvd.	Davis Blvd.
55th St.	11th Ave.	Gulfport Blvd.	Davis Blvd.

*NOTE: A Veteran City map of about 1905 shows this street as "Boca Ciega Blvd." When it was changed to Davis Blvd. is unknown.*

**Following Streets are Outside of present City Limits:****Changed in 1928**

Gulfport Blvd.	64th St.	Oleander Way	Gulfview Blvd.
	Oleander Way	Villa Grande Ave.	Washingtonia Ave.
Oleander Way	Pasadena Circle	Boca Ciega Bay	Boca Ciega Way
Pasadena Ave.	Central Ave.	Boca Ciega Bay	Oleander Way

**Later name change**

Sunset Dr.	Pasadena Ave.	Villa Grande Ave.	Gulfport Blvd.
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*NOTE: If a street is not included in these lists, it is because: (1) Its name was not changed, or (2) It did not exist in 1928.*

**CITY OF GULFPORT**  
**OLD - PRESENT STREET NAMES**  
**As changed February 21, 1928**

Original Name	From (between) (Present Names)	To	Present Name
Bay View Pl.	Beach Blvd.	54th St.	Dellett Ave.
Bedford Ave.	26th Ave.	29th Ave.	48th St.
Beuna Vista Ave.	26th Ave.	29th Ave.	Upton St.
Blackberry St.	49th St.	49th St.	18th Ave.
Bon Air St.	54th St.	58th St.	30th Ave.
Brown Ave.	24th Ave.	25th Ave.	York St.
Buhinia Dr.	25th Ave.	28th Ave.	59th St.
Casuarina Dr.	7th Ave.	Gulfport Blvd.	60th St.
Crescent Dr.	58th St.	60th St.	28th Ave.
Curn Ave.	49th St.	51st St.	23rd Ave.
Curtis Pl.	53rd St.	East to alley	30th Ave.
Del Rio Ave.	26th Ave.	29th Ave.	Tifton St.
Delett Prkwy.	52nd St.	53rd St.	Dellett Ave.
De Sota Ave.	7th Ave.	Boca Ciega Bay	58th St.
Disston Ave. (Blvd.?)	7th Ave.	Boca Ciega Bay	49th St.
Donbeya Ave.	58th St.	59th St.	24th Ave.
Egmont Ave.	28th Ave.	Shore Blvd.	57th St.
	11th Ave.	28th Ave.	57th St.
Espana St.	7th Ave.	15th Ave.	Freemont St.
Fairchild Ct.	52nd St.	East to alley	30th Ave.
Flora Ave.	Gulfport Blvd.	60th St.	17th Ave.
Florida Ave.	26th Ave.	29th Ave.	47th St.
Grant Ave.	7th Ave.	Shore Blvd.	54th St.
Grove Ave.	26th Ave.	29th Ave.	46th St.
Gulfview Blvd.	59th St.	64th St.	Gulfport Blvd.
Harding Ave.	49th St.	York St.	24th Ave.
Havana Ct.	53rd St.	West to alley	Dellett Ave.
Hover Pl.	53rd St.	54th St.	23rd Ave.
Lakeview Ave. <sup>2</sup>	Gulfport Blvd.	26th Ave.	59th St.
Lakeview Ave. <sup>2</sup>	49th St.	59th St.	Gulfport Blvd.

Lee Ave.	7th Ave.	Boca Ciega Bay	53rd St.
Live Oak Ave.	29th Ave.	31st Ave.	51st St.
Oak St.	52nd St.	51st St.	30th Ave.
Oleander St.	59th St.	60th St.	19th Ave.
	52nd St.	58th St.	19th Ave.
Palm Ave.	27th Ave.	Boca Ciega Bay	50th St.
	26th Ave.	Boca Ciega Bay	44th St.
Palmetto Ave.	11th Ave.	23rd Ave.	51st St.
Parkview St.	59th St.	Gulfport Blvd.	18th Ave.
	52nd St.	58th St.	18th Ave.
Patton St.	51st St.	52nd St.	Preston Ave.
Persea Ave.	58th St.	60th St.	27th Ave.
Pine St.	51st St.	West to end	18th Ave.
Pinellas Ave.	7th Ave.	Boca Ciega Bay	52nd St.
Pinehurst St.	52nd St.	58th St.	21st Ave.
Rose Ct.	Tangerine Ave.	20th Ave.	York St.
Seminole Ave.	28th Ave.	Shore Blvd.	DuPont St.
Seminole St.	58th St.	51st St.	16th Ave.
Shore View Ct.	53rd St.	West to alley	30th Ave.
Sunset Ave.	11th Ave.	Shore Blvd.	56th St.
Torres Ave.	11th Ave.	15th Ave.	York St.
	30th Ave.	31st Ave.	York St.
Washington Pl.	Beach Blvd.	54th St.	Essex Ave.
Wendell Ave.	28th Ave.	Shore Blvd.	Clinton St.
9th Ave.	64th St.	61st St.	7th Ave.
	55th St.	49th St.	8th Ave.
10th Ave.	64th St.	61st St.	8th Ave.
	55th St.	49th St.	9th Ave.
11th Ave.	64th St.	58th St.	9th Ave.
	55th St.	52nd St.	10th Ave.
	51st St.	49th St.	10th Ave.
12th Ave.	64th St.	61st St.	10th Ave.
	57th St.	49th St.	Newton Ave.
13th Ave.	64th St.	57th St.	11th Ave.
	57th St.	49th St.	14th Ave.
14th Ave.	63rd St.	61st St.	12th Ave.
	58th St.	57th St.	12th Ave.
	57th St.	49th St.	13th Ave.
15th Ave.	Gulfport Blvd.	57th St.	13th Ave.
	57th St.	49th St.	12th Ave.
16th Ave.	Gulfport Blvd.	62nd St.	14th Ave.
	58th St.	57th St.	14th Ave.
	57th St.	49th St.	11th Ave.
17th Ave.	Gulfport Blvd.	57th St.	15th Ave.
1st St.	58th St.	49th St.	31st Ave.
2nd St.	58th St.	46th St.	29th Ave.
3rd St.	58th St.	46th St.	28th Ave.
4th St.	59th St.	49th St.	27th Ave.
5th St.	59th St.	49th St.	26th Ave.
6th St.	59th St.	49th St.	25th Ave.
7th St.	59th St.	54th St.	23rd Ave.
	54th St.	53rd St.	24th Ave.
	53rd St.	52nd St.	23rd Ave.
9th St.	Gulfport Blvd.	59th St.	20th Ave.
	58th St.	49th St.	20th Ave.
10th St.	58th St.	49th St.	17th Ave.
11th St.	57th St.	49th St.	15th Ave.
17th St.	52nd St.	55th St.	Jersey Ave.
60th St.	7th Ave.	Tangerine Ave.	Gray St.



61st St.	7th Ave.	17th Ave.	Hull St.
62nd St.	7th Ave.	Gulfport Blvd.	61st St.
63rd St.	7th Ave.	Gulfport Blvd.	62nd St.
64th St.	7th Ave.	13th Ave.	63rd St.
65th St.	7th Ave.	Gulfport Blvd.	64th St.
Unnamed	26th Ave.	Boca Ciega Bay	Quincy St.
<b>Name Changed at a later date</b>			
Davis Blvd.	11th Ave.	Gulfport Blvd.	55th St.
	Gulfport Blvd.	Shore Blvd.	Beach Blvd.
<b>Outside of present City Limits</b>			
Boca Ciega Way	Pasadena Circ.	Boca Ciega Bay	Oleander Wy.
Gulfview Blvd.	64th St.	Oleander Wy.	Gulfport Blvd.
Oleander Wy.	Central Ave.	Boca Ciega Bay	Pasadena Ave.
Washingtonia Av.	Oleander Wy.	Villa Grande Av.	Gulfport Blvd.
<b>More Recent Change</b>			
Gulfport Blvd.	Pasadena Ave.	Villa Grande Av.	Sunset Dr.

## TRANSPORTATION

**trans'por-ta-tion:** "Systems and modes of conveyance of persons and goods from place to place." (*Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*)

It is fundamental that there can be no settlement of an area without some means of transportation. The settlers, and their goods, must get to the area in the first place. Then they must be able to ship out whatever it is that they produce that brings in money. There must be means of bringing in the needed goods they purchase with that money. As the settlement grows, this whole operation compounds upon itself and is increased by the comings and goings of visitors. It is equally fundamental that the better the transportation is — the more convenient and dependable it is — (other things being equal) the faster the settlement will grow, the more prosperous it will become and the more visitors (tourists) it will attract.

The history of Gulfport falls into three time periods, and this discussion of the local transportation means will follow these same divisions:

**Disston City — pre-1900**

**Veteran City — 1900 to 1910**

**Gulfport — post-1910**

Major transportation changes and decisions took place during each of these time periods and greatly affected everything which followed.

*Note:* In this material there are no footnotes. When necessary, credits are given in the text. At the end of each division there is a list of credits and suggested additional reading. Material in "quotes" is direct quotation from the source given. Material in parenthesis is background or general informational matter.

### *DISSTON CITY — Pre-1900*

Disston City, with its maximum population of about 150, was the largest of a half dozen or so settlements which grew up along the shores of the lower Pinellas peninsula during the years following the Civil War. When, in the late 1880's, it became apparent that only one railroad would enter the peninsula, and that it would terminate at Paul's Landing, all of those settlements except Paul's Landing started to decline. Paul's Landing became St. Petersburg; the others, except Disston City, vanished completely.

Until the railroad came, there were essentially no overland transportation means on the peninsula. The entire area (except for the beach islands) was covered by a virgin forest of closely spaced pine and other trees. All ground between the trees was grown solidly with palmettos, sawgrass, and mangroves — a practically impenetrable jungle, right to the water's edge. And within this jungle were numerous streams, tidal inlets, and swampy areas. All this made walking or horseback riding from point to point impractical if not impossible. All the earliest settlers arrived with their families and their goods in their own boats. After the backbreaking labor of clearing their new property and raising their first cash crops, those crops were shipped to market by the same means.

By the early 1880's the county had cleared a few so-called roads through this wilderness. One ran roughly south-north from Maximo Point, approximately along the route of today's 9th Street, skirting Bethel's village of Pinellas, Williams' village of Paul's Landing, on through Safety Harbor, and around the north end of Tampa Bay into the county seat of Tampa. The other road of interest to us ran east-west along the line of today's Lakeview Avenue, connecting Disston City with the other road mentioned. (Its name even then was Lake View Blvd.)

But these were roads in name only. They were merely narrow clearings through the forest with little attempt at stump and root removal, no bridges across the streams and tidal inlets, and generally fit only for slow, cautious travel on foot or horseback. Not until some time in 1886 was work

begun on bridges over the two streams which Lake View then crossed — and still does — Manual Branch at about 42nd Street and Mule Branch at about 38th Street.

The settlers themselves had cut a wagon-width road along the route of 49th Street to enable getting their crops to the Disston City dock. Just how far north this road ran is not known, but about 15th Avenue would be a good guess.

It might also be worth mentioning that there had been no attempt at grading any of these roads, or at providing any paving except the native sand. We can imagine what they were like during Florida's rainy seasons!

So, the only practical means of getting people, goods, and crops into or out of Disston City was by water. While most of the earliest settlers owned their own boats, some public transportation by water was available. After the Florida Railroad from Fernandina to Cedar Key was rebuilt about 1867, several steam and sailboat lines ran more or less regular service from rail head at Cedar Key to Tampa, Manatee River points, and Key West. Some of these boats made regular or occasional stops at Disston City, handling passengers, freight, and mail to the Post Office at Disston City, which was established in May, 1880, under the "Bonifacio" name.

(One of those Cedar Key boats was the *Mary Disston*, owned by Hamilton Disston and named for his mother. Local legend has it that this boat burned at Disston City dock, and that until recently her boiler could be seen off York Street at low tides. But it is known that the *Mary Disston* was operating in the Tampa/St. Petersburg/Manatee River service from 1889 until well into the late 1890's. So, if there was a boiler off York Street, it almost certainly came from some other ship.)

This fairly good Cedar Key ship service came to an end in January, 1885, when Plant's railroad reached Tampa and that city had no further need for the ship service from Cedar Key. From then on, the only regular ship service at Disston City was a twice-weekly sailboat service to Tampa operated by a Captain Williams. That this service was unsatisfactory is indicated by the fact that the *Sea Breeze*, during its one year of existence, carried several editorials on the need for better mail service. It did carry six announcements of better service to come, either in the form of more trips per week or in the substitution of steam for sail. But, at least as long as the *Sea Breeze* lasted, none of this better service materialized.

Disston City's dock was located approximately at the foot of today's York Street. We have been unable to locate any



details about it, such as length, width, type of construction or available water depth.

With transportation by land being virtually impossible, and transportation by water being slow, undependable, and sometimes dangerous, the people of Disston City realized that the only hope for growth of their settlement was railroad transportation. In this they were not alone. Florida, at the time, had numerous small settlements along the coasts and inland along the rivers and lakes. All wanted to grow; few had a chance without some kind of railroad transportation.

Florida had gone into the Civil War with about 400 miles of operating railroads, all in the very northernmost part of the state. The state, railroads, and everything else in the state came out of the war in 1865 bankrupt and physically wrecked. Only 56 of those 400 miles of railroad could still be operated, useable rolling stock was practically non-existent, and almost all terminal facilities had been destroyed.

However, through the activities of a group of "carpet-baggers" — who enriched themselves in the process — all of that original mileage was rebuilt and back in operation by about 1870.

But practically no additional mileage and no southward extensions were built until after the "Disston Purchase" of 1881. The \$1-million the state received from Disston enabled it to pay off the liens which had been placed against all state-owned land by the holders of defaulted state bonds. This enabled the state to resume the land grant program which largely financed all railroads built during this period. Over 3,000 miles of railroad were built in Florida between 1881 and 1900, practically all of it financed with the aid of state land grants.

Starting in 1881, the predecessor railroads of the Atlantic Coast Line and of the Seaboard Air Line, Florida's two great railroad systems, built southward from the seaports of Fernandina and Jacksonville and from Live Oak, the only point of connection between Florida's railroads and those to the north.

But neither of those systems had any plans for the building into the Pinellas peninsula. Both were aiming for Tampa, then onto Manatee River and Charlotte Harbor points. That left the people of Disston City, and all of the other Pinellas settlements, looking to the "independents" if they were to have any rail service.

There were dozens of those independent railroad com-

panies in Florida at the time, all aiming to provide service to points being bypassed by the big systems. Most of them were underfinanced and headed by people with little or no railroad construction or operating experience. Some of those people were more interested in those land grants than in ever operating a railroad.

Two of the independents had charters to build into Pinellas — the Silver Springs Ocala & Gulf and the Orange Belt. Almost until the end, it seems that the people of Pinellas expected the SSO&G to be their railroad. The *Sea Breeze* carried several articles stating the intention of that railroad to complete its line into Pinellas "very soon." The *Tampa Tribune* published at least one article along the same lines. But the SSO&G never extended any further south than Inverness, and it established its Gulf of Mexico terminal at Homosassa about the same time that the Orange Belt railroad reached Paul's Landing.

The Orange Belt railroad was the creature of a Russian immigrant, Peter Demens, who had become very successful in the sawmill business at Longwood. In connection with that business he had acquired, for unpaid bills, the 35-mile-long Orange Belt Railroad running from Longwood to Monroe, a small St. Johns River town a few miles west of Sanford. That gave Demens a taste of railroading. He obtained a state charter to build to the Pinellas peninsula and a land grant which eventually amounted to over 60,000 acres. Using his own money, and some more raised locally, he built 30 more miles, reaching Oakland on the south shore of Lake Apopka in November, 1886. At that point the money ran out.

On December 1, 1886, Hamilton Disston approached Demens and offered him 60,000 acres of Disston's land if the Orange Belt were terminated at or near Disston City. Demens counter-offered with a demand for a total of 110,000 acres for running the railroad through Disston City enroute to Mullet Key where he would establish a great port city. Disston and his associates turned him down promptly and finally.

Demens then tried several schemes to raise money to continue building. One of those schemes was to obtain donations (land or cash) from landowners who would benefit by proximity to his railroad. Committees were appointed at each settlement along his proposed route to solicit such donations; the committee for Disston City was made of Miranda, Torres, Ward, and Cox. So far as is known, no donations were ob-

tained in Disston City, and only a few from other settlements.

In the meantime, John C. Williams had platted a town site on 2,000 acres he owned surrounding the settlement of Paul's Landing. He offered Demens one half of those building lots, plus free right of way, if the Orange Belt were terminated at Paul's Landing. Half of the lots in a 2,000-acre town site was a far cry from Disston's original offer of 60,000 acres, but it was better than nothing. So the first train on the Orange Belt Railroad arrived at Paul's Landing under its new name of St. Petersburg on June 8, 1888.

While the Orange Belt did not do much for the growth of St. Petersburg for several years, it did start the decline of Disston City and the other settlements of the area. The business people especially realized that there was little hope of success away from the railroad. The retailers either closed up or moved into St. Petersburg. King moved his sawmill from Clam Bayou to a point on the railroad at about today's 12th Street, where over the years it grew into the Pinellas Lumber Company. By 1900 there were only about five families remaining at Disston City.

*Epilog:* Demens had built a strictly minimum cost, almost comic-opera type of railroad. Derailments were an everyday way of life, his second-hand, poorly maintained locomotives broke down with distressing frequency. Few trips ever arrived at anywhere near the scheduled time. His unstandard, narrow gauge made impossible the interchange of passenger or freight cars with other railroads. The only town of any consequence along his entire 150 miles of route was Longwood (1890 population: 1,000). The net result was that the Orange Belt Railroad carried few passengers and little freight, and was in bankruptcy within two years.

It was purchased by interests representing Henry B. Plant, builder of the predecessor system of the Atlantic Coast Line. Plant moved the eastern terminal from Monroe into the larger river port of Sanford, and changed the name to the "Sanford & St. Petersburg Railway." He made no other changes, and service continued to be atrocious. But eventually, about 1898, Plant rebuilt enough of the S&SP (Trilby to St. Petersburg) so that through passenger and freight trains could be operated between Jacksonville and St. Petersburg. That marked the real beginning of St. Petersburg's growth.

Peter Demens salvaged enough cash out of the bankruptcy to go West and become successful in other lines of business — a steam laundry and a fruit brokerage.



## CREDITS AND SUGGESTED ADDITIONAL READING

- 1) Details of the terrain and roads of the Pinellas peninsula will be found in Straub's 1929 *History of Pinellas County*, and in Grismer's 1924 *History of St. Petersburg*. Also, first-hand accounts by people who actually lived in the area at the time are in Bethel's 1914 *History of Point Pinellas* and in the *Sea Breeze*.
- 2) Definite information about the Cedar Key steamboat service has been found only in scattered mentions in various Florida history books and in railroad timetables and guide books of the time. The fact that Disston City had a Post Office in 1880 is documented in the book *Chronology of Florida Post Offices*, issued by the Florida Federation of Stamp Clubs in 1962.
- 3) Information about water service to Tampa comes mostly from the *Sea Breeze*.
- 4) The story of rebuilding, economically and physically, of Florida's 400 miles of railroad during the reconstruction period following the Civil War is told in a series of three articles by Paul Fenlon in the *Florida Historical Quarterly*, issues of October 1953, April 1955, and January 1956.
- 5) There are two excellent sources of information on the "Disston Purchase." *Florida's Promoters*, published in 1973, includes a very readable article on the subject. Another book, *Land Into Water — Water Into Land*, by Nelson M. Blake, published in 1980, includes a highly detailed and thoroughly documented account. It should perhaps be noted that Disston's Pinellas activities were a very small part, probably less than 10%, of his Florida operations.
- 6) Histories of the Silver Springs Ocala & Gulf railroad, and of the predecessors of the Atlantic Coast Line and of the Seaboard Airline railroads are found in George Pettengill's book, *The Story of the Florida Railroads*, published in 1953 (out of print, but the St. Petersburg Library has a copy).
- 7) The story of the Orange Belt railroad has been told with varying degrees of accuracy by every local historian, starting with Bethel in 1914. The most recent, and most authentic, account, written by Professor Albert Parry, appeared in the *St. Petersburg Times* of June 5, 1983. My account is a condensation of that article, with some additional detail given me privately by Professor Parry and some "first-hand" information from the *Sea Breeze*. Professor Parry is currently working on a biography of Peter Demens which he expects to publish in the near future.

## VETERAN CITY — 1900-1910

The greatest transportation happening in all of Gulfport's history occurred on April 5, 1905, when the first trolley arrived from St. Petersburg carrying the crowds to the dedication of the Veteran City development and to the first trip of the boat line to Pass-A-Grille. Although the Veteran

City promotion was unsuccessful, and for several years the trolleys never took in much revenue to meet expenses, they made possible the development and growth of Gulfport many years earlier than would have been the case otherwise.

After the Orange Belt Railroad bypassed Disston City in 1888, the little settlement went into a fast decline. The merchants and most of the population move out, and the dock and hotel were wrecked by the 1901 hurricane. Everything pointed to the probability that the area would revert to its original trackless wilderness state.

But in three widely divergent locations — Philadelphia, St. Petersburg, and Pass-A-Grille — events were transpiring which, when they jelled together on that April, 1905, day, would start our area on its path to becoming a modern, progressive city.

In Philadelphia, Hamilton Disston had committed suicide, still owning many thousands of acres of Florida land (including most of the Pinellas peninsula) but practically penniless cashwise. He had spent his entire fortune in a vain attempt to drain the Everglades and establish lush farms on the super-rich soil resulting. His major heir, a younger brother Jacob, was a much more practical man than had been Hamilton, and his chief interest in the Florida land was to turn most of it into cash as promptly as possible. He sold all of it except the Pinellas peninsula holdings — where he lived part of each year and for which he apparently saw future development opportunities.

In St. Petersburg, Frank (F. A.) Davis, another Philadelphian, had come upon the scene. Walter Fuller describes Davis as “the man who started St. Petersburg on the road to greatness” in his *St. Petersburg and Its People* (page 109) and as “the man of vision” (page 114). Davis foresaw that if the little village was to amount to anything two things were needed: electricity and a trolley line.

Also in St. Petersburg, Captain J. Frank Chase was in the Tampa Bay steamboat business, in partnership with sawmill owner George King. Captain Chase had served with distinction in the Civil War (Union side) and had come close to dying from wounds received at Gettysburg. Chase, as much as and perhaps more than Davis, was “the man of vision,” since he saw the little town’s need for electricity and trolleys and tried to do something about it before Davis did.

At Pass-A-Grille, George Lizotte had converted an old beach house into the first Hotel Bonhomie to accommodate

the people, mostly from Tampa and St. Petersburg, who were beginning to realize that the then unspoiled Gulf beaches had great potential as a place for fun, rest, and relaxation. Unfortunately, the only way to get to Pass-A-Grille was by a long, sometimes rough, steamboat trip around Point Pinellas.

(Few people nowadays remember, if they ever knew, the great importance of the electric trolley car throughout the entire country from before 1880 through the early decades of this century. The automobile was the toy of the hobbyist or the pride of the very rich. Roads and streets upon which it could be driven were almost non-existent. For most of this period the only practical way for most people to get around within the cities was on the trolley car. Extensions of the City trolley lines into the surrounding rural areas made possible the beginnings of today's suburban developments and the growth of the smaller "satellite" towns. The trolley line made it possible for people to live in the suburbs or in the satellite towns while still working, shopping, and finding entertainment in the cities.

Starting as early as 1910, very gradually at first but with ever-growing tempo, the streets and roads were paved, the automobile was improved and its cost brought down until it was within reach of almost everyone. The inevitable result was that the suburban trolley lines and most of the central city lines were driven out of business.

The only difference in this detail between the St. Petersburg trolley system with its five suburban extensions and the trolley lines in most other parts of the country was that the St. Petersburg system was later in starting and later in being abandoned. In 1900, St. Petersburg was a long way from being a "big central city" but Disston, Davis, and Chase had great faith that it would become just that, and soon!)

The founding of Veteran City, the building of the St. Petersburg trolley line with its extension to Veteran City, the construction of the dock with its "Gulf Casino," and the starting of the boat line to Pass-A-Grille, were all the result of complicated corporate and financial interrelationships between Jacob Disston, F. A. Davis, and J. Frank Chase. The trolley line which encircled St. Petersburg and the line to Veteran City were planned, built, and operated as a single trolley system. The history of one cannot be separated from the history of the other. And, to a lesser extent, that history is closely interrelated with the history of electric power in St. Petersburg. The trolley company and the power company



were under the same ownership and shared the same local superintendent.

Starting as early as 1891, proposals were made in St. Petersburg by various people to build electric power systems, water works, and a trolley system. The first such proposals to actually reach the town council were in 1886 when Captain Chase, "representing a Philadelphia syndicate" (Buckley, page 4) applied for all three franchises. The council turned him down.

F. A. Davis must have been a better salesman of dreams! On February 2, 1897, he received a 100-year franchise to provide electric power within the town. He built a 50-kilowatt, wood-burning power plant with second-hand equipment at the foot of Central Avenue and, on August 5, 1897, St. Petersburg had its first electric illumination — 34 street lights.

(To put things in proper perspective, that 50-Kw plant, at full capacity, could not have operated all of the floodlights on today's Gulfport Lions Little League baseball field!)

On December 1, 1901, Davis received another franchise from the town council — to build and operate an electric street railway within St. Petersburg. By February 13, 1903, the necessary second generating unit at the power plant was in place, track had been laid, trolley wire strung, and service was inaugurated with one second-hand, eight-bench, open car running along Central Avenue from 9th Street to the Bay.

Construction proceeded on the balance of the system provided for in the Davis franchise — from the corner of 9th Street and 7th Avenue N., east on 7th Avenue to 2nd Street, south to 4th Avenue, east again to Beach Drive, south again to Central, west to 9th Street, south again to the City limits at 9th Street and 6th Avenue S. — a total of about 2½ miles. Partial service was provided as portions of this route were completed.

September 28, 1904, service was started over the entire route with a celebration, including a round-trip excursion on which "Conductor Scott rang up 71 fares as the jolly party whizzed over the delightful route." To take care of the anticipated crowds of riders, the St. Petersburg & Gulf Railway had purchased two used eight-bench open trailers to supplement its one motorized car.

Davis set up two corporations to hold and operate his St. Petersburg franchises — the St. Petersburg & Gulf Railway and the St. Petersburg Lighting Company. Both were owned

by the St. Petersburg Investment Co., F. A. Davis majority stockholder and president. Secretary/Treasurer and a minority stockholder was B. F. Massey, an attorney who had been chief cashier of the Pennsylvania State Treasury. Fifteen years later, Mr. Massey wrote reminiscences of his early days with the Davis enterprise which were published by the *St. Petersburg Times* on February 21, 1915. Some excerpts will give us a picture of Davis, his dreams, his methods of operation, and of conditions in the area in the early 1900's, written by the man who was Davis' chief legal and financial officer:

"... he moved his machinery to St. Petersburg, and ... it was the most primitive and out-of-date aggregation of machinery which had ever been collected from the four corners of the world, but after being put together ... the light it gave was wonderful to behold!

"... Mr. Davis naturally looked around for other worlds to conquer, so applied to the council for a franchise to operate a trolley system which no one but Mr. Davis seemed to think was a necessity in any way....

"However, Mr. Davis, who seemed to be endowed with powers prophetic more than is allowed to the ordinary mortal, went right ahead as if the entire country were teeming with people crying and pleading for transportation from place to place.

"After a careful study of the geography of the Pinellas peninsula, Mr. Davis concluded that, at least sometime, it would be profitable to have a trolley line from St. Petersburg to a point on Boca Ciega Bay where boat service could be installed making Pass-A-Grille the point where in the future ... there was sure to be a flourishing seaside resort ... people must flock there by the thousands and tens of thousands, and ultimately both the electric light and power company and the trolley line would be money-makers of the highest order.

"I was driven along the line of the proposed trolley from St. Petersburg to Gulfport, very few houses or inhabitants to be seen — almost impassible thickets through which we have to force our way ... water up to the horse's knees, all the while Mr. Davis pointing out the site of a future great city, but I failed to see anything which impressed me with the fact that Mr. Davis would ever see any of the prophecies fulfilled.

"... only through friendship for Mr. Davis I assisted in the formation of the St. Petersburg Investment Co."

Mr. Massey's article winds up with three paragraphs about the extreme difficulty of raising funds, as the banks in Philadelphia (and other northern cities) had no faith in Florida and would make the requested loans only when personally endorsed by persons of known good credit. He boasts that no obligation of the St. Petersburg Investment Co. was ever protested, and that no endorser of the company's loans was

ever called upon to make good.

(That was in 1915. Two years later, the company was in receivership, and everybody who had invested in it lost most of or all of that investment.)

(The terms "used" and "second-hand" appear frequently in accounts about the Davis enterprises. With the exception of two trolley cars purchased at a bargain sale, every single piece of equipment, either trolley or power plant, ever purchased by either of the Davis companies, was used — and much of it had been used to the point of exhaustion.)

Davis never had any intention of terminating his trolley line at the south town limits. On January 7, 1903 (before that first stretch of line along Central Avenue was finished), he obtained a county franchise for a route to Boca Ciega Bay via 9th Street, Tangerine Avenue, and Disston Blvd. Then, in 1904 (before the complete line in St. Petersburg went into operation), he received a state charter providing for "Building and operating an electric railroad from St. Petersburg to the Gulf of Mexico via Disston City." (Hill & Pledger, page B-41)

Even while construction was still in progress on the trolley line within the town, St. Petersburg & Gulf crews were working on the biggest single project involved in the extension to Boca Ciega Bay — the 160-foot-long bridge over Booker Creek at 9th Street and 7th Avenue (today's Roser Park area).

January 1, 1905 — "The Booker Creek bridge is completed and trolley service is extended to Greenwood Cemetery (9th Street and 11th Avenue S.)"

March 2, 1905 — "The SP&G Railway has completed grading of the roadbed to the shores of Boca Ciega Bay at Disston City. The work of laying the rails and putting up the wires has reached a point a little over two miles from Disston City (Maximo Road, now 31st Street). . . . The school bus (horse-drawn) running on the Tangerine and Glen Oak route has been discontinued. The county school board has made arrangements with the SP&G Railway, which covers the same ground, to carry the children at the same price paid the driver of the bus. This is much more comfortable and convenient for the children and is very much appreciated."

(At the time all of the schools were in or close to downtown St. Petersburg. The Glenoak School on 19th Street was not opened until 1914.)

April 5, 1905 — The Big Day! A party and picnic lunch were given at Veteran City to celebrate the completion of the trolley line, combined with dedication ceremonies for the Veteran City land promotion. Everybody who was anybody



in St. Petersburg rode the trolleys out to Veteran City to participate. (And to listen to several seemingly endless speeches about the great future for Veteran City.)

While the Davis franchise had called for building south along Disston Blvd., he had actually built south right down the middle of the Veteran City plat, along 55th Street (Boca Ciega Blvd. on that plat, now Beach Blvd.). The Veteran City dock was not yet finished so this first "end of line" was probably at about 27th Avenue where a combination passenger, freight, and mail transfer station had been constructed.

The whole story of the Veteran City promotion is told elsewhere. Briefly, in spite of the big dreams of Captain Chase and of F. A. Davis, and the big money of Jacob Disston, it was an almost complete flop. Many veterans came, looked, and went away. (It was too far out in the wilderness, too undeveloped.) Others started for Veteran City, got as far as Tampa, liked what they saw, and stayed there.

(Tampa and its surroundings were much further along in their development than was St. Petersburg. For example, in 1906, Tampa had 35 street railway miles and 51 cars; St. Petersburg had less than nine miles and five cars.)

The major impact of Veteran City on Gulfport's history was that it brought the trolley line to the area. Later, when development really started, the trolley line enabled people to get to Gulfport; then, after they had settled, it enabled them to travel easily to the "central city" which by then St. Petersburg was becoming, to work, shop, and find entertainment.

The initial trolley schedule provided for seven round trips per day from St. Petersburg to Veteran City, with two additional trips as far as Glen Oak. Three of the Veteran City trips connected with the launch "Jenny" for Pass-A-Grille. Since the dock was not finished, this connection involved some walking and sometimes some wading!

August 19, 1905 — "The cars now run clear to the end of the wharf, making direct connection with the launch 'jenny,' and the wharf being electrically lighted, doing away with the heretofore nuisance of walking through the dark to the boat."

January 14, 1906 — "The Casino at Veteran City opened last night with a dance to the music of King's orchestra. The Casino has a 40' x 110' dance hall on the second floor with a stage at one end." This Casino was built on piles beside the trolley wharf and about halfway out to the end of that

wharf. Considering the land filling which has been done since those days, that would put that first Casino just about where today's Casino is located. The first floor of the Casino apparently housed a refreshment stand, many slot machines, and facilities for the trolley and the Pass-A-Grille boat crews.

(It was very common in the trolley car days for the trolley companies to own various amusement enterprises along their lines. They hoped to make money from these enterprises, but their main purpose was to generate passengers for the trolleys.)

The Casino, and its two successors, provided much of the revenue for the Gulfport trolley line during its entire existence. "Old-timers" tell of seeing during the 1930's, three or even four trolleys parked on Beach Blvd. most every dance night, waiting for the dancers to go back downtown.

The following quotations are from an unpublished history of the St. Petersburg trolley system, written by the late Robert (Bob) F. Torbett. Bob tells rather graphically what conditions were like in the Veteran City days:

"On Sundays and holidays the cars were crowded with people wanting to get away from it all; on weekdays hardly anybody.

"... The carline was the only connection with the city and the crews were most accommodating. They would always wait for someone to finish dressing or some other chore so they would not have to wait for another car.

"Occasionally storms and high water would wash out parts of the line. People with urgent business in town would have to walk.

"Many fishing boats tied up at Gulfport; the fishermen would take the street car to St. Petersburg. They would string their catches across the front of the cars.

"... The ride was described as bumping and rattling over palmetto flats."

The entire length of the line was single track, and initially only one passing siding was provided. This severely restricted the flexibility of scheduling, limited the number of trips which could be operated, and sometimes resulted in long delays waiting at that siding for a passing car which might never show up due to some malfunction. In 1906, a second passing siding was constructed, which somewhat relieved that situation. However, there was no signal system (there never was on any of the St. Petersburg lines) which meant operation "by time card" and sometimes useless waiting at the sidings.

During the first year or so, the company used trailers, pulled in one direction, pushed in the other, by the motor cars. This operation led to the first fatality on the system.

On November 5, 1905, Conductor Hughes, when stepping from a motor car to its trailer, fell between the two cars and was run over, receiving such severe injuries that he died within two hours. This was one of only two recorded fatalities on the entire St. Petersburg trolley system.

There were three other accidents on the Gulfport line during the early years, two of which resulted in injured employees and two which resulted in totally wrecked cars. Otherwise, the Gulfport line was quite free of accidents, unless you count the killing and injuring of horses and cattle and the runover of snakes and 'gators which were frequent occurrences.

Davis had projected that much of the SP&G profit would come from freight and express — fish, fruit, ice, lumber, and miscellaneous material for the people of Veteran City and Pass-A-Grille. Initially the company used homemade flat-bed trailers pulled or pushed by passenger cars for this service. Irving Slaughter tells of a siding at about 27th or 28th Avenue S. where these trailers, loaded with lumber, were parked for unloading by people building at Veteran City.

In October, 1906, an enclosed combination freight, express and mail car was put into service. It had been purchased used, probably from the recently abandoned Manatee County trolley line. (The Society had a picture of this car, along with passenger car # 34 on the Veteran City dock, taken some time after 1913.) For a while, a daily "ice trip" was made with this car, which would stop anywhere enroute to sell a block of ice.

The early records on passenger cars are murky at best, but it seems reasonably certain that by 1910 the company had purchased 11 passenger cars; an unknown number of these had been resold, wrecked or junked. Best guess is that in 1910 the company owned two or three open cars, two or three enclosed cars, and one combination open and closed (Metropolitan type). It is certain that it was a rare occasion when all (five or six or seven) of these cars were available for service at the same time. The use of passenger trailers lasted only a couple of years.

The only trackage extensions made by the SP&G prior to 1910 were all minor, and all in downtown St. Petersburg. One was a line on the company's new Tampa Bay pier to provide direct interchange of freight and passengers between the Tampa Bay steamboats and the trolleys.

During this 1905 to 1910 period, as the company acquired



more cars, more frequent trips were scheduled. However, equipment breakdowns often made the actual service quite different from the advertised service. The most frequent service during this period was during the spring of 1908 when cars were advertised every 45 minutes. The worse service period was during the summer of 1907 when the company had only one operable car which ran with no particular schedule, taking about two hours for the round trip. Most of the time, the company tried to maintain a one-hour frequency until 9 p.m., with an additional trip when the Casino dance ended, and with as much additional service on weekends to accommodate the Pass-A-Grille "sun-worshippers" as the number of passing sidings and the number of useable cars would allow.

Very soon after the ferry service to Pass-A-Grille was started, it became apparent that the launch *Jenny* could never cope with the demand, and it was replaced by larger boats — the *Gypsy* and the *Florida*. These two boats provided this service until it was discontinued after the opening of the McAdoo Bridge to St. Petersburg Beach in 1919.

Throughout this five-year period, fares from St. Petersburg to Veteran City remained at 15 cents, with the return fare being 10 cents. A combination round-trip ticket, Tampa to Pass-A-Grille and return via steamboat, Tampa to St. Petersburg, then trolley to Veteran City, then the launches to Pass-A-Grille, was priced at \$1.50.

The F. A. Davis companies (which, besides those previously mentioned, included the St. Petersburg Transportation Company providing steamboat service between Tampa, St. Petersburg and Manatee River points) had never, since its founding in 1897, taken in enough revenue to meet expenses. There were continual demands on "Philadelphia" (actually, on Jacob Disston and certain associates) for cash to meet construction costs, equipment purchasing, payroll and other operating and repair bills. In early 1907, a local money panic hit the St. Petersburg area for reasons not now clear. Neither of the local banks had failed or suspended payments, yet cash became so scarce that much local business was being transacted by barter, and some of the local businesses took to paying their employees in script or IOU's instead of in cash.

Apparently, this money panic was the trigger which resulted in the decision by Disston and associates to force the Davis companies into receivership. Frank Harrison, a local

hardware store owner, was appointed receiver, with the job of operating the companies until a new management could be found to take over. Davis was forced to give up all his stockholdings and his positions with the companies.

(Disston's two major associates during all of this money lending to St. Petersburg area enterprises were Warren Webster, a banker, and George S. Gandy. Gandy was related to the Disstons by marriage, and was "well off" in his own right as the result of financial operations involving Pennsylvania street railroad systems. Later he moved to St. Petersburg where he became very active in business, social and civic circles, and gave his name to the first bridge across Tampa Bay.)

Late in 1907, H. Walter Fuller (father of local historian Walter P. Fuller) became president and manager of all of the operating companies, and Gandy became president of the St. Petersburg Investment Co., the holding company which actually owned the operating companies. Fuller had been in various businesses in Bradenton, including management of Manatee County's short-lived trolley line. He had also owned a Tampa Bay steamship line which competed with the Davis operation in the same field.

F. A. Davis went into the real estate field and with two partners founded Pinellas Park. Then, with H. Walter Fuller, he started the development of Davista in the West Central area. Both of these projects were big successes later, but in those early days they suffered the same fate as Veteran City — complete failures. F. A. Davis died in 1917, a broken man who had seen every one of his great visions for the future of the St. Petersburg area fail — only because he was too far ahead of his time.

Transportation by highway during this era was not much better than during the Disston City era. Tangerine Avenue was opened beside the trolley tracks from 9th Street to Beach Blvd. The tracks bridged the brooks and tidal inlets, but horses and wagons still had to wade. One side of Beach Blvd. was opened from Tangerine to the Bay, and a few streets in the Veteran City area were cut through to provide access to the hopefully-to-be-sold lots. All of these street openings were nothing more than wagon-width clearings through the native forest and underbrush, with no paving except the sand.

In 1903, 2½ miles of 9th Street and Lakeview Avenue were "hard-paved." Actually, that paving was rolled-down

oyster shell. Grismer said "the work was done very poorly and soon went to pieces." One other trail which was opened up during this period was Disston Blvd. which was cut through from the Bay to the line of 30th Avenue N. to meet another trail known as "John's Pass Road" which ran from 9th Street to Boca Ciega Bay.

Only the most adventuresome ever attempted to drive an automobile over any of these so-called roads. The only public transportation by water available at Veteran City was the Pass-A-Grille launch service.

### CREDITS

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- 6) Contemporary St. Petersburg and Tampa newspapers.

## GULFPORT — 1910-1985

### Section 1 — The Trolleys

The coming of City government to Gulfport in 1910, of itself, caused no changes in trolley service. But in other parts of the St. Petersburg area, major changes to the St. Petersburg & Gulf Railway Co. were in the making which later on would result in changes to Gulfport's trolley service.

Starting about this time, the first of many real estate booms hit the area. Subdivisions were being planned and platted in all directions from downtown St. Petersburg. Many never got beyond the paper stage, others actually cleared land and started selling lots. The promoters of these subdivisions all had one thought in common — success would be impossible without a trolley line to downtown St. Petersburg.

Between 1911 and 1914, four more suburban extensions, totalling about 17 track miles, were built radiating from the downtown portion of the trolley system. Every one of these extensions, including track, poles, wire and right of way, was built and paid for by subdivision developers and turned over free of charge to the SP&G for operation!

The extensions, with the date of first operation of the en-



tire line and their approximate routes were: (In all cases, portions of the route were in operation before the date shown.)

Bayboro-Big Bayou . . . . . March 12, 1914  
South along 5th, 3rd, and 6th Streets to 38th Avenue S.

Piedmont-Seminary . . . . . December 1, 1914  
North along 9th Street to 34th Avenue N., east to Locust St. to the Southerland Seminary (now Masonic Home).

North Shore . . . . . March, 1915  
From the line on 7th Avenue N. along Oak and Locust Streets to a new baseball field on 21st Avenue N. (Later re-routed to the mainland end of the Snell Isle Bridge.)

West Central-Jungle . . . . . December 21, 1913  
Central Avenue to Park Street, north to Elbow Lane, west to the Bay where connecting launch service was provided to Treasure Island and Mitchell's Beach.

Shore Acres . . . . . July 1, 1926  
(Actually a further extension of the Seminary line.) North from 34th Avenue and Locust Street to 40th Avenue N., east across Placido Bayou to Shore Acres.

This additional mileage, which more than tripled the original system, required more cars and more power. In the four years between 1910 and 1914, the SP&G purchased eleven used cars and two new cars which were acquired at a manufacturer's distress sale when the original purchaser went bankrupt before taking delivery. The two new cars, at 45'-10" length and capacity of 48 passengers, were the largest cars ever used on the St. Petersburg trolley system and they spent most of their active days running the Gulfport Line.

To handle the increasing electrical loads, both from the trolley system and from sales of residential and commercial electricity, two more generating units were added to the waterfront power plant — again only second-hand equipment was used. Of the four generating units at that plant, three produced commercial AC, only one produced DC for the trolley system. Result — when it had its occasional failures, all running trolleys ground to a stop and stayed where they were until repairs could be made, be it an hour or a week!

Under Fuller's management, a couple of more passing sidings were built on the Gulfport Line. These, together with the availability of more cars, resulted in generally increased service and fewer delays. However, there was much tinkering with the schedule in attempts to find the best arrangement which would meet the demand for service consistent with the availability of cars and the need to hold down expenses.

Probably the best service offered during the remaining

days of private ownership was during the winter of 1917-1918 when Gulfport service was advertised every hour, with the cars running express to 49th Street and with additional local service along Tangerine every half hour. Eight additional trips were advertised every day to connect with the Pass-A-Grille boats. The worst service period appears to have been during the winter of 1915-1916 (during World War I) when only eight trips per day were operating on the Gulfport Line.

In areas other than scheduling service continued to be bad. The poorly maintained cars broke down regularly, resulting in cancellation of trips. The track was still rough, uneven and "soft," causing frequent derailments with resultant delays, not only to the derailed car but to all others trying to use the same track! At times electric power was so scarce that cars running at night could not use their lights.

In the electric power area, by 1912 it had become apparent that the waterfront power plant had been enlarged to the maximum possible extent at that site, but was becoming unable to meet the demand, either from the trolley system or from regular electric customers. Construction was started on a wholly new plant on the east side of 16th Street between 1st and 2nd Avenues N. The first two generating units at this new plant went into service in April, 1914, with a total generating capacity almost double that of the entire waterfront plant, which was demolished. This 16th Street power plant represented two firsts for Disston's St. Petersburg enterprises: it was outfitted with all brand new equipment and was largely financed by public sale of bonds instead of using Disston's personal funds. Two other generating units were later added at this plant, which served the area electric needs until 1926.

Unfortunately, the designers of the 16th Street plant again provided only one source of power for the trolleys — a rotary converter. Rotary converters were highly reliable pieces of equipment, but, like any piece of machinery, they did fail occasionally. When this one failed, all trolleys stopped where they were and stayed there until the converter could be repaired. This was yet another source of public resentment against the SP&G!

At the same time this new power plant was under construction, a new combination carbarn, repair shop, and car storage yard was built on the west side of 16th Street between 3rd and 4th Avenues N. Here, for the first time, the street railway had under-cover repair and painting facilities

for its fleet. The result was a noticeable improvement in the reliability and in the appearance of the cars.

The actual breakup of what had been the F. A. Davis companies started April 12, 1915, when the St. Petersburg Light and Power Co. was sold to General Gas & Electric Co. of Baltimore, one of several such holding companies engaged in buying up utility operating companies all over the country. Even the official history of Florida Power Corporation, *Lightning in the Sun*, does not disclose how much Disston received for this property; but it was obviously enough to repay most of the loans he had made for electric power purposes.

(While under General Gas & Electric ownership, the St. Petersburg company was merged with several other small utility companies operating along Florida's west coast. When the holding company was broken up in the early 1940's, the St. Petersburg company, by then greatly enlarged, emerged as the Florida Power Company, serving much of west central Florida. After a few more mergers and a lot of hard work by a lot of dedicated people, it has become the Florida Power Corporation of today — still serving St. Petersburg under the same franchise — although somewhat amended — which F. A. Davis obtained in 1897!)

H. Walter Fuller turned out to be more of a "man of vision" — or, to be blunt, more of a promoter — than Davis and Chase put together. Using some of his own money, some obtained through mortgages, some borrowed from Jacob Disston, and working through the various Disston corporations, he purchased almost all of the land along Central Avenue from 16th Street to Boca Ciega Bay, in some places miles deep, in others only a few blocks deep. Numerous subdivisions were platted, the three largest being the original Pasadena Subdivision, Davista, and the Jungle. Fortunes were spent clearing this land, and Fuller even talked the City fathers into paving the entire length of Central, a job which was completed March 13, 1915. 175 automobiles took part in the dedication parade (Grismer, 1925, page 75). (This should have alerted all concerned as to the ultimate fate of the trolleys!)

Everything appeared to be going beautifully — real estate was selling, enough money was coming in to make the payments on those mortgages, and the trolleys were finally making money. But gradually World War I was beginning to take its toll. Fewer and fewer tourists were arriving to buy lots, cash was getting scarce, more and more lot purchasers were failing to make their payments. Fuller began to have



trouble meeting his obligations and, finally, in October, 1917, the companies were forced into receivership by a relatively small mortgage holder who had not received his interest.

During the period of receivership, minimum trolley service was operated. On the Gulfport line this meant a car every hour, with no express service and no special cars to meet the Pass-A-Grille boats.

In April, 1919, the entire trolley system was offered for sale to junk dealers at its scrap value of \$165,000. The St. Petersburg City fathers woke up fast! Even though the automobile was coming, it was not yet here, and without the trolleys downtown St. Petersburg was dead. A rush deal was worked out by which the City acquired an option to purchase the system for \$175,000, with the City to take over operation immediately. The money was raised by means of a bond issue which included enough extra cash for some badly needed immediate improvements. The City took title in August, 1919.

The City acquired 15 cars in this deal, of which only seven were considered to be useable. The immediate effect was a severe reduction in service — that on the Gulfport line became every two hours, and trolley company launch service to Pass-A-Grille was discontinued. For some years, private operators ran Pass-A-Grille boats from Gulfport, but the trolley system made no attempt to coordinate its schedules with those of the boats and no more through tickets to Pass-A-Grille were sold.

Actually, the need for this Pass-A-Grille ferry service was disappearing. The McAdoo bridge from Villa Grande Avenue (about 7th Avenue S.) to the north end of St. Petersburg Beach was open, more and more automobiles were showing up, and the resort business on the beach island was gradually moving northward, away from Pass-A-Grille toward the beach end of the new bridge. On October 25, 1921, a major hurricane came through the area and totally destroyed the Gulfport trolley pier and the Gulf Casino, among much other damage. Neither pier nor Casino was rebuilt, putting a permanent end to any public transportation by water at Gulfport.

Immediately upon taking over, the City of St. Petersburg instituted a program of improvements. Very soon enough of the unuseable cars had been rebuilt so that during the latter part of the 1919-1920 winter season, 20-minute service was being provided along part of Tangerine Avenue, with hourly

service to Gulfport running express as far as 28th Street. Major improvement was also made to the track, with over one half of the Gulfport line being totally rebuilt and the balance being reworked. This substantially eliminated the derailment problem. More passing sidings were added which greatly increased the flexibility and possible frequency of scheduling.

The City also set about on a program of purchasing additional cars. During its period of ownership it acquired 42 new cars, and toward the end of trolley service, greatly increased business forced the rush purchase of four used cars. The cars which had been acquired from the SP&G, except for the two new large cars, were junked as quickly as they could be replaced by new cars. The two SP&G cars, which were quite new, were held in reserve for occasional rush period use until 1927 when they were retired. In 1929, their bodies were installed on concrete platforms on either side of the tracks on 6th Street, between Central and 1st Avenue N., to provide waiting shelters for the major trolley transfer station being established at that point.

The last trip made by any of the old SP&G cars was during the 1926-1927 winter when one of them was being operated to handle a large circus crowd. When curving into Central Avenue, its frame broke and tied up trolley and automobile traffic for several hours.

Not everything went smoothly in connection with the City takeover. At the time, a Mr. George Barber was superintendent of the power plant. In 1975, Mr. Barber wrote a letter of reminiscences. To quote one paragraph:

"As was usual in such a decision, the 'City fathers' had to make an inspection of the property, which naturally included trolley rides over existing trackage. Well, part of that inspection included an evening ride in an open car to Gulfport, during which a quite violent lightning storm caused our rotary converter to flash over. (The only source of power for the trolleys.) This necessitated a thorough cleaning of the commutator and brush holders before resuming service. (Probably took a couple of hours.) In the meantime, that open car stood somewhere out on Tangerine with the City officials and other free riders fighting the rain and the mosquitoes. Well, you can imagine what the *Times*' comments read like the following morning!"

The first 28 of the new cars were small, one truck (four wheels), one-man "Birneys," and were placed in service on various lines as received. The Gulfport line was the first to have all new cars. These one-truck cars were nicknamed "katydids" because of their habit of swaying front to back on their very short wheelbase, making for a rather uncom-

fortable ride. But the City accountants estimated that each saved over \$2,800 per year on labor costs.

The other 16 of the new cars which were purchased after 1924 were larger — 48-passenger, one-man double-truck units which provided a much smoother ride. They were purchased when it was becoming apparent that all of Florida was entering another of its periodic booms while the demand for public transportation was still strong. The Gulfport line received the first of these larger cars because it had (and always did have) the largest ridership of any of the St. Petersburg trolley lines.

Then, in the early 1940's, another local boom made even this fleet inadequate, and a rush purchase was made of four, fairly large used cars, two from Miami and two from Ft. Wayne, Indiana. This purchase was required even though the first abandonment of trolley service had already occurred. (Service over the Placido Bay bridge to Shore Acres had been discontinued in 1938.)

Fares on the Gulfport line remained at 10 cents until August, 1928, when they went up to 20 cents, or by purchasing tokens in advance, 15 cents. Later, toward the end of trolley service as patronage began to decline, a variety of discount rates were offered in attempts to encourage trolley riding. But nothing worked. People would not give up the convenience of their automobiles regardless of how low trolley fares were.

Very early during the period of City ownership, the problem of providing service to growing areas not served by the trolley tracks came up. Extend the tracks, add new lines, or go to buses? After the City spent a lot of money on consultants, the buses won. The first bus service operated by the City was an extension of the Jungle trolley line, in 1932, across the Long Bayou bridge to serve the then new V.A. Hospital at Bay Pines. The first bus line to actually replace a trolley line appeared in 1935 when the trolley bridge across Placido Bayou to Shore Acres became unuseable, and bus service connecting with the North Shore line at the mainland end of the Snell Isle bridge was substituted.

Throughout the 1920's and 1930's, the St. Petersburg Municipal Transit System operated with small losses. Part of the problem was the seasonal nature of the area tourist-oriented economy. During the winters it was next to impossible to operate enough service to meet the demand, but during the summer downtown St. Petersburg was totally dead



— most of the stores and practically all hotels closed up tight from April through November. Yet the permanent residents demanded some semblance of good public transportation, even though it meant running many trips with few or no riders.

The coming of World War II changed all that for a few years. The armed services converted the entire area into a massive training camp with tens of thousands of recruits, other service personnel, and many families located here. The demand for public transportation exploded. All bus and trolley lines operated day and night the year round, carrying far more passengers than their supposed capabilities. In the six years 1939 through 1944, the transit system made almost enough profit to make up for all the losses sustained during the previous twenty years!

The coming of peace ended that period of transit prosperity, and the area economy reverted to the prewar pattern, with one difference — the automobile was now here! All winter long, all day long, every day the downtown streets were choked with an almost immovable mix of trolley, automobile and truck traffic. More and more demands were heard to “get rid of the trolleys.” More expensive consultants were engaged to make studies, with the end result a decision to convert the entire transit system to an all-bus operation.

As buses could be obtained the trolley lines were abandoned. The first to go were the North Shore and Big Bayou lines on January 12, 1948. The Gulfport line was the last to go, with the final trip being run at midnight, May 7, 1949. Officially, one car — #100 — made that last run, carrying an invited load of area greats and near-greats and some old-time transit system employees. One of these was Warren Scott, one of the first two men hired by the original St. Petersburg & Gulf Railway in 1903. (On September 28, 1904, Scott had been Conductor on the first trip over the completed City portion of F. A. Davis’ original trolley system.)

While written history tells us that Car #100 made that last trip, verbal stories by people who were there tell us that actually three cars were run on the trip to accommodate the crowds of trolley buffs from far and near who came demanding to be part of this sad ceremony. And that all three cars arrived back at the carbarn stripped of everything not very solidly nailed down!

## Section 2 — The Buses

The next morning, Sunday, May 8, 1948, buses started serving Gulfport, initially following the same routes and schedules as had the trolleys. Over the years there have been many changes in the routes and schedules. At this time the Gulfport line from downtown St. Petersburg serves Central Plaza, the 49th Street-Gulfport Blvd. area, the Gulfport Casino area, then runs north on 58th Street to serve Tyrone Gardens, Crossroads Center, and Tyrone Mall. Weekday service is hourly from St. Petersburg to Gulfport from 7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., and hourly from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. from Gulfport to Tyrone Mall. No evening or night service is provided. Instead of Sunday being the big day, as it was in the trolley days, bus service is operated only every two hours on Sundays.

Bus service to the western portion of Gulfport has been provided since the early 1930's. At first this service from St. Petersburg ran south on 4th Street to Lakeview-Gulfport Blvd., to 62nd Street, then returning over 15th Avenue S. in front of the Florida Military Academy to 49th Street, then back to Lakeview. No schedules of this service have been found.

After 1945, this line was rerouted along 11th Avenue S. in Gulfport, continuing on to South Pasadena, then north on Pasadena Avenue to Crossroads and Tyrone Mall. Service is irregular, with twelve daily trips along 11th Avenue S. to South Pasadena but only nine of them continuing north to the Mall. Only six trips are scheduled on Sundays, and no evening service is offered.

On October 1, 1984, the St. Petersburg Municipal Transit System merged with the Pinellas Transit System to form the Pinellas Suncoast Transit System serving the entire county except some of the beach cities.

One immediate result of this merger was a route from the Gulfport Casino area north on 58th Street, west on 11th Avenue to South Pasadena. Hourly service is run from 6:50 a.m. until 5:50 p.m., with only nine trips on Sundays.

Base fare on all bus lines is 50 cents, with an extra charge for transfers and discounts for students and senior citizens.

The future of all public transportation in the United States is very much in doubt. President Reagan's proposed budget would eliminate all federal subsidies for such services. Most of the systems, including that of Pinellas, depend upon those subsidies for one-third to one-half of their investment and

operating costs. Without federal subsidies few of the systems can stay in business.

### Section 3 — The Railroad

“Gulfport welcomed its first train — the entire population turned out to greet it. All members of the Gulfport Board of Trade boarded the train for the trip into St. Petersburg.” — so the *St. Petersburg Times* reported on September 22, 1914, in its article about the first train on the newly-completed Tampa & Gulf Coast Railroad. That first train was a 15-car special which had stopped at every station between Tampa and St. Petersburg to pick up the guests who had been invited to the dedication ceremonies held at the railroad’s new St. Petersburg station on September 21, 1914. That new station was located in the city block southeast of 9th Street and 2nd Avenue S., the block which later became Webb’s City main parking lot.

So Gulfport finally had its railroad, 26 years after Disston City had been bypassed by the Orange Belt Railroad in favor of Paul’s Landing. However, the Tampa & Gulf Coast Railroad, skirting as it did the City’s northern boundary a mile and a half from the then business and residential center around the Casino, never had much impact on Gulfport. Its major help to the local economy was in cutting out the long wagon haul to freight stations in St. Petersburg for the fishermen and fruit and vegetable growers.

The Tampa & Gulf Coast Railroad started out in life as a logging road connecting the lumbering operations and the sawmills of northern Pinellas and southern Pasco counties with the Seaboard Railway at Lutz. New owners took over in 1913 and obtained a charter to build from Sulfur Springs on the Seaboard to Clearwater and St. Petersburg. The route in the Gulfport area crossed Central at about 70th Street, crossed 64th Street at 5th Avenue S., then gradually curved to meet 7th Avenue S. at 49th Street.

(7th Avenue S. was then, as now, the northern boundary of Gulfport.)

The Gulfport Station, a combination passenger/freight operation, was set up where the railroad crossed 49th Street. While it remained independent, the T&GC used the motto “The Orange Belt Route.” This has caused some writers to confuse this railroad with the 1880’s Orange Belt Railroad which bypassed Disston City in favor of Paul’s Landing.

Although it had little direct impact on Gulfport, the



T&GC had tremendous effect on the area as a whole. For the first time there was direct rail service to Tampa, making the trip in two hours as against the all-day trip with two changes of trains on the Atlantic Coast Line (successor to the Orange Belt). Freight, express and mail service was correspondingly speeded up. And along with Gulfport, the Seminole area, Safety Harbor, and Oldsmar had railroad service for the first time.

During its first few years, the Tampa & Gulf Coast ran two passenger trains daily in each direction, both stopping at all stations enroute and timed to connect at Tampa with the Seaboard trains to the northeast and midwest. Starting early in 1917, an express train was added which stopped only at Clearwater and Safety Harbor. The express train and one of the locals carried through Pullmans and coaches to the Washington-New York area. About this same time, the Seaboard Air Line Railway purchased the Tampa & Gulf Coast, and from then on the line was operated as a Seaboard division.

The maximum service ever operated on this line was during the 1929-1930 winter season when four express trains and one local were run in each direction. The express trains carried through Pullmans and coaches to Washington-New York, to the Chicago area, and one of them had through cars to Miami. By the early 1950's, service was down to three express trains daily in winter and two in summer, with no local service.

Three stations to serve the Gulfport area have existed at various locations and various times during the period of operation of this railroad:

**GULFPORT** — at the 49th Street crossing, was established when the road was built. During the first few years, all trains stopped here, but none of the express trains ever stopped at Gulfport. A 1938 schedule shows no trains stopping here and, by 1951, the name Gulfport had disappeared from the schedules. Sidings for the delivery of carload freight, primarily to serve the Anderson Lumber Company, were maintained at this location until the railroad was abandoned.

**FLORIDA MILITARY ACADEMY** — at the 64th Street crossing, existed from the early 1930's until about 1951. It was a "platform only" stop, with no station building. No available schedule shows regular stops here, only "flag" or "conditional" stops. (Conditional stops are made only to handle long-distance passengers, generally those to or from

Virginia and points north.) There was also a freight siding here to serve the ice plant on 5th Avenue S. at 65th Street.

(The old ice plant building still exists but now houses a vintage automobile restoration firm.)

The story is told that when the Florida Military Academy moved from Green Cove Springs to Gulfport, the entire faculty and student body arrived at this station on a special train, then paraded through 64th Street and 13th Avenue to the new home in the old Rolyat Hotel buildings with each man and boy carrying his personal belongings and as much school property as he could carry.

PASADENA — there is confusion as to the exact location and to whether or not a station building existed. Publicity material issued by the Pasadena Estates developers states definitely that it was located at the Pasadena Avenue crossing on the site now occupied by the Kenfield Funeral Home. That material also carries an architect's drawing of the station building. On the other hand, careful checks of railroad mileage tables indicate that it actually was located at the site of the original Davista station at the Central Avenue crossing at 70th Street. If at this location, it was as a platform stop only with no station building. In either case, its prime purpose was to serve the Pasadena developments, most of which were located within the then city limits of Gulfport.

(Research is underway to try to resolve this question, but it will probably be months, if ever, before a definite answer is found.)

In either case, service here was similar to that at the FMA station, with no regular stops but most trains making conditional stops.

The "Pasadena" name first appeared in railroad schedules in 1926 and had vanished by 1954. A freight siding carrying the Pasadena name was maintained at the Central Avenue location until the railroad was abandoned.

All passenger and through freight service on this original Tampa & Gulf Coast line between Clearwater and St. Petersburg was discontinued with the Seaboard-Atlantic Coast Line merger in 1967. Local freight service was continued until the line was abandoned in late 1984.

At this writing, the tracks are being torn up and the right-of-way has been purchased by Pinellas County. The County's intent is that some day a modern trolley line will be built on this right-of-way from St. Petersburg to Clearwater and serving the intermediate cities and a couple of modern shopping

malls which are close to that right-of-way. If this ever happens, Gulfport will again have its trolley cars!

— Willard B. Simonds

## CREDITS

### *Section 1 — The Trolleys:*

Same as listed in Division No. 2, Veteran City era.

### *Section 2 — The Buses:*

Maps and transit schedules in the author's collection.

### *Section 3 — The Railroad*

- 1) Interstate Commerce Commission, Vol. 35, Valuations, page 732.
- 2) *Seaboard Railroad*, by Richard E. Prince, 1969, Green River WY. (copy in St. Petersburg Public Library, Reference).
- 3) Moody, *Manual of the Railroads*, 1918.
- 4) Official guides to the railroads and Seaboard Air Line schedules in the author's collection.

## CHAPTER 9

### *SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS*

#### ANDY ANDERSON POST 125

The Gulfport American Legion was originally chartered in December 1941 as American Legion Post 125. Meetings were first held in donated space in a Gulfport waterfront building. Then it was re-chartered in December, 1947, under its present name. Anderson was a Marine Veteran of World War I and was the first of the original membership to die in service of his country.

The land for the Post Home at 1607 49th Street S. was acquired early in 1948. The present facilities include a large meeting hall, lounge, full kitchen, and a spacious parking lot. There are 422 members and our number is increasing. There is an active Ladies Auxiliary and a Sons of the American Legion Organization.

Post 125 has made a special effort to draw in Vietnam Vets with excellent results. Fully 25% of our membership consists of such men, including the Post Commander Steve Lacey, Second Vice Commander Steve Hoek, Adjutant Gene Boland, and Historian Pat Davis Johnson.

The Post serves as a social center for members, their families and guests. More important, Post 125 strives to fulfill



the Legion goal — "For God and Country We Serve Our Community, State and Nation." For example, during the holidays, food baskets are distributed to the needy; in 1983 Flo McRoberts raised about \$1400 for this purpose. Halloween and Christmas parties are held for children and youths, and an Easter egg hunt always brings many seekers! Our local Nursing Home and the Shelter for Abused Wives and their Children are visited, Blood Bank programs are supported (200 pints of blood collected in 1983), and half of the collections are donated to the community.

The Post really supports baseball: enthusiastically sponsoring youth under leadership of Earl Roney. Last year, more than \$1400 was donated for uniforms and caps and to help maintain the playing fields, and it sponsored the Winter Instructional League for 15-18-year-olds. Each year the Post sends five or more boys to Boys' State at the Capitol. We work closely with Gulfport business people for this worthwhile program. The participants learn to reproduce our governmental processes. One of our recent recipients went to Girls' State and was elected to the Supreme Court!

The Post has a Service Officer expert in Veterans' Affairs — including educational and medical benefits. Service Officer Frank Brunson advises and assists members and non-members and has a splendid record in this work. We donate American flags to schools, churches, and scouting organizations. One year we gave the flag to Boca Ciega High School and sent our Color Guard to raise it with their school flag. Annually we endorse an oratorical contest at our high school. That program is chaired by Scotty Fisher and participating students compete for State and National scholarships.

A new and popular event recently was a dinner for the football team of our high school. They enjoyed our spaghetti dinner and went on to win their Homecoming Game that day!

We observe Memorial Day, Veteran's Day, and the Fourth of July with Color Guard and Firing Squad ceremonies to which the public is invited. On the Fourth of July, traditionally we hold Open House for Gulfport families, and food and entertainment are provided. At sunset there is an impressive ceremony, with proper disposal of National, State, and Allied Flags by torching. Hundreds of torn, tattered, and otherwise inappropriate-for-use flags are brought in during the year for this rite, which is unique in the Tampa Bay area.

The Honor Society of the Post is the 40 and 8, named in

memory of World War I box cars which carried either 40 soldiers or 8 horses. The Society has a continuing program of support for nurses' training, and the Leprosy Foundation.

Post 125 Officers and Members work closely throughout the year with the Police and Fire Departments of Gulfport and with the Lions Club.

We are proud to be a productive part of the community.

—Pat Davis Johnson, "Scotty" Small

## BOCA CIEGA YACHT CLUB

It was July 21, 1965, when the City of Gulfport welcomed the Boca Ciega Yacht Club to its new home on our Bay. Until that time the Club had been a boating organization since 1940 in the downtown harbor of St. Petersburg, and its name was the Sunshine City Boat Club.

With the coming of the M.G.M. *Bounty of Mutiny on the Bounty* as a tourist attraction, the Club was given its departure orders and \$25,000 as compensation for the loss of docks, clubhouse, and other improvements. Added to the Club's treasury, the sum of \$30,000 was available for a new home somewhere . . . except that there were few available locations!

With membership depleted due to long uncertainty of location, many of the surviving members were in favor of disbanding the Club, in which case each member would receive about \$350 in cash. The hard-core faithful won out, however, and the move to Gulfport was made. Public opinion on the wisdom of the ouster raged. Red Marston, long-time boating editor of the *St. Petersburg Times*, said, "Gulfport, steadily improving its waterfront and happy with a marina that is realistically planned and financed, considers the Sunshine City Boat Club an asset."

The new name was adopted from the original Boca Ciega Yacht Club, the first of its kind in South Pinellas County, which about 1910 was located at the foot of 52nd Street, close to the Pier. Some time later, perhaps in the 1926 hurricane, it was swept away by the tropical fury and only the pilings remained — long a favorite place for fishermen to dry their nets, by the way!

Bill Nettling, Building Superintendent for the City of Gulfport, and an avid yachtsman in his younger days, assisted the new group in transforming the former Retired Coast Guard Officers' clubhouse into an active sailing organization. The

location was good, and a strong program of building and improvement was enacted under Commodore Peterson. The Club members, many of them skilled craftsmen, did most of the labor.

Some of the major improvements which continued over the years, were:

1. Employment of West Coast Engineering to prepare acceptable plans for the improvement program.

2. Construction of a south breakwater or jetty with rocks, landfill, and seawall; the latter surveyed by Glace Engineering Co. in 1969.

3. Dredging a boat basin out of a mud flat from a depth of two inches to ten feet of depth. The fill was pumped to create more upland on the Club area lease and to the location of the Police Pistol Range across the harbor channel.

4. Repair and refurbishment of the existing building on the property, including a ten-foot addition to the east side of the structure to be used for offices and storage. There was an entirely new galley section rebuilt at the north end.

5. Construction, in a series of projects, of new docks for the mooring of cabin-sized sailboats.

6. Construction of a substantial launching ramp by Pierce Construction Company so that dry storage could be provided and drainage could be assured.

7. Paving of the entire area for parking and boat storage.

8. Erection of a launching crane for smaller boats, stepping masts, and docks on the harbor channel.

By April 6, 1966, the first phases of the improvements were completed and the Boca Ciega Yacht Club formally celebrated its flag-raising conducted by Admiral Farragut Academy cadets, a ribbon-breaking by the first yacht to enter the new slips, and the driving of the golden spike by Chief Carpenter-Member Jimmy Willcoxon. The Mayor of Gulfport and many well-wishers approved. The hard-core survivors of the old Club stood tall and proud as they presented Boca Ciega Bay with this momentous send-off into yachting history.

Let us not forget the Ladies' Auxiliary of the old Club, ever ready with coffee and sandwiches for the toilers and donators of many much-needed improvements around the Club.

But the new mooring facilities were definitely *ahead* of their time. Attraction of new members and boats was painfully slow. The once-healthy treasury hit bottom. Some



drastic measure was necessary to attract the yachting world to Boca Ciega Bay.

More editorial comment on the ouster from St. Petersburg still raged. Red Marston, in 1970, maintained, "It is a small club but it is more a yacht club than a couple of more heralded, affluent clubs we can think of on this coast. Its sailing school, soon to graduate its 500th member, takes it far out of the card-playing, influence-dealing and socially prominent status world which seems to be part and parcel of many larger clubs loaded down with armchair admirals."

The solution to attracting more yachts and yachtsmen to Boca Ciega Bay was found in the highly successfully sailing school opened in 1967. It coincided with the provision in the Club Charter "to promote instruction and education in safe boating and all nautical activities while remaining as a non-profit organization."

The Boca Ciega Yacht Club created widespread recognition by bringing in well-known nautical authorities and by teaching hundreds of neophytes how to sail a boat. Over half of the membership were sailing school graduates and a waiting list was soon set for mooring spaces.

Activities around the present-day Club (1983) make it look like a three-ringed nautical circus. The Sailing School prospers in turning out new wind sailors twice a year. The youth program does likewise for the youngsters. The Club is a valuable member of the Florida Sailing Association and, among other events, annually produces the Statewide Veterans' Day Regatta brought to and financed by the Boca Ciega Yacht Club. Formerly on Tampa Bay, it was financed by the City of St. Petersburg. The ladies call themselves the Rhumb Runners and compete with their feminine counterparts in interclub regattas. Boca Ciega Yacht Club, a member of the Florida Women's Sailing Association, keeps the ladies' nautical pot boiling.

Our biggest and best unusual Club activity is the sailing family weekend cruises to nearby out-of-the-way islands and ports of call. Summer often sees a small flotilla venture as far as Sanibel Island. When you see the fleet crowding the start after a cannon booms, it means a Sunday race on Boca Ciega Bay. Look for the results in the sports page on Monday morning! All of these boats are cabin sailboats with comfortable quarters to spend a weekend or a month aboard.

All this — not to mention what they call "day sailing" — purely on the Bay for pleasure and a delight to the folks on

shore who love the water. Did someone ask about nautical social events? They are once a month — covered dish . . . lots of fun.

So the people in Gulfport say of the newcomers, "We're glad you came to our town."

— *Carl A. Norberg*

### FRIENDS OF THE GULFPORT PUBLIC LIBRARY, INC.

A small group of women led by Mrs. Andrew E. Potter met at the Methodist Church on February 15, 1971, to organize for the purpose of attaining a cultural center where "music, art and literary appreciation could be enjoyed." This aim has been continued; but additionally, fund-raising has been included to make possible numerous gifts to the Library, primarily those unprovided by the City's budget, generous as it may be.

"The Friends" was incorporated March 12, 1971 — the signers were Frank E. Quindry, R. W. Caldwell Jr., Grace Brajcki, Emily Wilson, Eva B. Jopson, Betty Sweet, Father Frank Goodman, Edith Haas, and Karen Godfrey.

Frank Quindry was the first President, followed by Karen Godfrey, Katherine Baker, Anna Marthe Pence, Allean Davis, "Connie" Burde, and Frances Purdy.

By April 1971, there were 125 members, including 14 life members. As of this date (1984) we have more than twice that number, including 54 life members.

Meetings were held at the Methodist Church or the Pasadena Country Club, and the first dinner, which was to become an annual event, was held April 21, 1971, at the Club. The late Dick Bothwell, *St. Petersburg Times* columnist, was the speaker on that occasion.

Story hours, puppet and mime shows, and lately special occasion parties for children through the generosity of George Sladkovsky, have recognized our concerns about involving children in library services. Monthly art exhibits have enabled local artists to display and "The Friends" to receive token donations from their sales.

Seven yearly programs devoted to book reviews especially by local writers, travelogues, calligraphy, writing personal histories, have given members and the public opportunities to learn and to make new friends during social hours following the programs. Annual dinners have featured a variety of musical treats. Fund-raising events include biennial sales of

donated books and magazines and flea market tables offered for five dollars a space. Purchases to improve library services have been topped by a copier replacing the previous purchase and income from that far outweighs costs of supplies and service; and recruitment of both users and "Friends."

In 1983 we moved from meeting in the Community Center to the new Gulfport Multi-Purpose Senior Center. Our "nest egg," zealously earned through these years, will perhaps be used as seed money for restructuring our library building to provide suitable spaces for children, offices, small meeting rooms, and entrance redesigning.

Our library serves about 600 readers, including less than 100 part-time and about 100 full-time non-residents. For ten years there has been a movement to incorporate all libraries in Pinellas County into one system; our stand has been that we hope for library services for all people but wish to maintain local control over and support of OUR library.

Hopefully, libraries will be made available where they do not exist and all may enjoy the caring and community-centered type of service we have.

— *Allean Davis,*  
*"Connie" Burde, Frances Purdy*

### GULFPORT CITIZENS' ASSOCIATION

The Gulfport Citizens' Association was organized in November 1980. Charter members included the first officer - Morris Rabinowitz, Mort Zimble, Lawrence Anthes, and Ella Jean Macken. It has grown steadily and now has about 200 members.

The prime objective has been to promote good government and the welfare of residents in Gulfport. Members regularly attend Council and Zoning Board meetings and participate when they feel it is indicated that they do so.

Our meetings have been well attended and have been devoted to Hurricane Preparedness, Crime Watch Programs, Forums for Candidates in City Elections, the Countywide Bus System, and other timely topics. Town meetings offered chances to discuss issues of concern to all residents. A Forum on Proposition One drew a large audience, including several invited guests — members of the County Commission, State Representatives, and others.

The Association looks forward to continually working for the best possible government in Gulfport.

— *Dr. Morris Rabinowitz, President*



### GULFPORT CIVIC CLUB, INC.

On October 1, 1969, a group of concerned residents of Gulfport met at the Community Center under the temporary chairmanship of Col. Reginald B. Keating, Ret. USA Corps of Engineers. Quickly the formalities of organizing were accomplished and the Colonel was elected President and served until his death February 23, 1972. Frederick S. Allen served as President a few months but resigned when elected Councilman because of possible conflict of interest. Col. William E. Kerns, Ret. USA Corps of Engineers, was elected and served two years, faithfully devoted to the objectives of the group. He was succeeded by Frances Purdy who vigorously supported most of the earlier programs. Five other officers were elected to serve, but with improvements in City government the need for this organization's watch dog aim receded. *The Gabber* announced January 26, 1978, that the Club was in a state of suspension. The balance of about \$100 in the treasury was given to the City of Gulfport for use in the Library.

During its first year the Club attracted 600 members, largely from the new Town Shores condominiums through Mr. Geller's anxiety to have his complex owners feel a belongingness to the City. Monthly meetings were held and bulletins mailed to members, though the dues always stayed at one dollar. The Club obviously was responsible for a resurgence of City pride! Many supported overall improvements, especially in the new Library and in beautifying selected City properties.

Tag Days and the Booster Committee, chaired by Katherine Baker, targeted money-raising efforts to buy large-print books, encyclopedias, furnishings and carpeting. Social events were sponsored — danced attended by as many as 600; and fish fries and festivals were held at the beach.

Business and program meetings concentrated on learning about local government, recreation and recreation opportunities, how to encourage small business, and other timely topics. Home decorations at Christmas were judged and awarded, starting in 1972. Members were certainly influential in establishing and maintaining suitable standards of performance in City employees and elected officials. Senator "Bill" Young was a frequent visitor.

Scrapbooks contain pictures and clippings supporting the above statements. Proclamations issued by the Mayor of

Gulfport were published for Tree Planting in November, 1973, and a ceremony held at Beach Blvd. and 23rd Avenue S. is reported in pictures. That Mrs. Potter moved to Texas after 40 years of active participation in community affairs was selfishly deeply regretted. Annually there were programs devoted to care of trees and shrubs sponsored by the Beautification Committee which Mrs. Potter had initiated.

The Senior Citizens' Advisory Committee was started by Council in January, 1974, upon recommendation by this Club because of the tireless efforts of Robert Gordon, President of the Reassurance Plan. This Committee has served continuously, spearheading the services which make Gulfport uniquely suitable for senior adults (see description elsewhere). When Las Vegas Nights were declared illegal, card parties and rummage sales were held to buy treelings, shrubs and other improvements for some City properties. Efforts to have certain buildings identified as historic sites failed.

Talks reported in available clippings included "Indians of Florida and Old Cemeteries," Bothwell's "Birthdays and Reunions," "Driver Safety," "Marine Biology," "Hurricane Preparedness," and many more. Members participated in the Swine Vaccine program in 1976; and bought 12 safety seats for swings for Gulfport Elementary School. Of course, the group was active during the Bicentennial Celebration — serving on City Committees, helping with the Citizens' Parade, and preparing the Time Capsule (in Library) — 2/5/77. Efforts of some members resulted in identification of Wood Ibis Park on 58th Street S. and its dedication on March 22, 1975; and later, in the dedication of Clymer Park.

Perhaps the most spectacular accomplishment of the Civic Club was initiation of the Festival of States, which ran several years. Read about them elsewhere in this book. Several of the early programs are available with other Club papers, in our Museum.

— Frederick S. Allen,  
Norman Schalm, Frances Purdy  
— Three Past Presidents

### GULFPORT COMMUNITY CLUB

Early in 1939, five ladies were talking together and decided it would be nice to meet regularly with their husbands to have supper and chat about their travels and other

common interests. This started the Community Club, which has been living up to its first-stated aims — to foster good fellowship, interest in recreation, and the orientation of new residents to this area.

The first members didn't keep records but, in 1943, they elected Mr. Frank Hayward as Chairman, Mrs. Edna Chrissman as Vice Chairman, Mrs. Elsa Roberts as Secretary, and Mr. George Kolb as Treasurer. Dues were one dollar; recently they have been raised by fifty cents. Minutes were kept beginning in 1944 and have been carefully preserved ever since.

Many eventful times have been enjoyed — concerts by the Disston City Band, the Florida Military Band, and there have been water races on the Bay, minstrel shows and, quite regularly, musical and slide programs in homes of members. They have generously shared memories of exciting trips abroad and throughout the United States; and continue to sponsor trips to Florida attractions, including boat rides on the Bay.

The Club has donated to National Foundation of Infantile Paralysis, the March of Dimes, the Salvation Army, and Goodwill Industries.

During early years, the meetings were held at Casino # 2, then at the Community Center. Now they are held at the Gulfport Multi-Purpose Senior Center twice monthly except during June, July, and August. Membership is about 85 but has been as high as 160.

At this time there are several members who have celebrated their 90th birthdays, and Mr. Reynolds was over 100! Parents of several were, and/or are active, including those of the Immediate Past President and the Incumbent.

Their scrapbooks have been beautifully done by the Historians. Mr. Hubert Bell started them off well! Another early Historian was Mrs. E. J. Leverk who wrote at the close of her term: "What is the old year? It is a book on which we backward fondly look, the laugh, the tear, the sun, the shade, all 'twixt the covers gently laid; no leaves uncut, no page unscanned, close it and leave it in God's hand."

We feel the Gulfport Community Club, in existence for 48 years, is now the oldest functioning social club in the City of Gulfport.

— *Claire Deel,*  
*James E. Anstead*



## GULFPORT COTERIE CLUB

Formerly the Young Woman's Club, we were organized by several members of the Woman's Club, primarily by Mrs. John Squires (Doris). It was hoped we could become a Junior Club, federated by Florida Federation of Women's Clubs. However, we were sponsored by our parent and functioned under our first name until we outgrew it — and about ten years later we obtained our Charter as the Coterie Club.

The first Chairman was Mrs. William MacNeill (Barbara) who convened the first session at the Pasadena Country Club with 24 members present. Dolores Dwight Anthon was elected President April 13, 1953. Sixteen have served in that office since then — several more than once; and membership has continued to be about 25, including three charter members — Midge Fischer, Sophie Hern, and Maxine Fantz.

In our first year we raised \$483.53 for the American Cancer Fund. Mrs. Noble Doss (Almeda) was our next President and that year we had a reception for Gulfport's first City Manager, Aaron Marsh, and his wife. All City officials were guests and the public was invited.

From time to time we sponsored Brownie and Girl Scout troops. We have continuously helped with donations to the St. Petersburg Science Center and Al Lang Memorial Field. We marched as Colonial Ladies in the Bicentennial Parade in 1976. We started a 5th and 6th grade Cotillion for Gulfport students at the Retired Coast Guard Center and it was popular for ten years, until 1964.

Through the years we have helped financially with many Federation projects, as well as certain local ones. For twenty years we have given one or two scholarships each year to a Gulfport student to attend a Florida college. Annually we contribute to our elementary school, our Library, the Free Clinic, and other organizations. We meet in our homes and are really good friends and good Club members.

— *Maxine Fantz, Historian*

## GULFPORT GARDEN AND BIRD CLUB

Early in 1941, several women doing Red Cross sewing in the "Piping Hot Dining Room" of Sunny Manor (now Cedars) decided they would like to know more about raising flowers and vegetables here in the South. They were a determined nucleus who shortly gathered others around them and,

by May, 1941, they organized the Garden and Bird Club with over 200 members within two years. At the first meeting, 60 attended and became charter members. Mrs. Stella Tamm, her mother Mrs. Abigail Fredericks, Mrs. Daniel O'Keefe, and Mr. and Mrs. Francis Walker were the organizers and included the first officers.

The initial enterprise was to build a small hot house where many beautiful items were later shown and won prizes — with help from the St. Petersburg Garden Club.

In order to attain their main objective (the beautification of Gulfport), they held flower shows and garden and yard contests. Mr. and Mrs. W. L. Brooks won the honors in the first contest. Flower or vegetable arrangements became a feature of the early meetings and shell collections were also popular. Summer picnics, trips to beautiful gardens like those of the Andersons, and boat trips under the leadership of Mrs. Daisy Morris, were held to the delight of bird-lovers. The Audubon Society provided many pleasant meetings with slide talks on our birds.

The first "five-year plan" included cleaning up along the railroad tracks and advertised a "blackout" of old grass and weeds everywhere. We started an annual habit of planting 800 petunias in February 1942, and 1,000 more in December along our main streets. The Victory Gardens during the war were a "must." That the members did not neglect the flowers is established by the fact that our members won blue ribbons in the St. Petersburg Flower Show of 1946 (see Scrapbooks in Museum).

The years passed, highlighted by clean-up days, petunia planting, and interesting programs including one on snakes. A little nine-year-old expert on growing of orchids, Miss Laurel Coleman, was a delight! More ribbons were won. We learned about the hydroponic gardens of Dr. Paul Chatelier, enjoyed a dance exhibit by the "Young Ballerinas" (4th-graders), piano solos by Mrs. Lester Yeager and, of course, our own annual Flower Shows. Some of our Flower Shows had exciting and eye-catching themes: "Breath of Spring," "A Rainbow Garden," "Circus Capers," "Blue Skies and Green Thumbs" and one which certainly describes us well — "Marching Along Together."

The beautification projects continued — trees were planted along the waterfront, planters on Beach Blvd. were initiated, hibiscus were planted at the new Gulfport Multi-Purpose Senior Center, and new shrubs were planted at the

Gulfport Public Library in 1984. One of the earliest projects was the improvement of the grounds of the Community Hall back in the 1940s and today we have plans to upgrade the appearance of what was the "Red Cross Building - Gems Building" and now is the Historical Society Museum. Hopefully, we shall replace shrubs at the Community Center when their restructuring is complete.

The condominium era brought a slight swing toward potted plants and small flower arrangements, but trees and flower gardens have never been neglected by our Horticulture Chairman who, for many years, was Mayor Jay P. Clymer. Also among our members who were well-known in other spheres — Baroness Cherkasoff who served as President from 1947 to 1949; Anna Marley Smiernow, the "Troubador of the French Freedom Fighters" (an active member when she lived in Gulfport).

So we go on, like the theme from one of our flower shows — "Marching Along Together."

— *Stella Tamm,*  
*Agnes Conron*

### GULFPORT LIONS AUXILIARY

The Gulfport Lions Auxiliary has a very busy history — where to start? As all good stories begin with "Once upon a time," so must ours! . . . Once upon a time there lived in a pretty little town by the water a nice aggressive young male Lion named Bill MacNeill. He was so strong and capable that his fellow Lions chose him to be King Lion in 1951-52. Now the King soon discovered, in addition to all the honor and glory connected with his position, there was also lots of hard work. He called his fellow Lions together and said, "Look here, we're not being very smart. There's too much work for everyone, so why don't we get all our lady Lions [wives] together and sell them on the idea that buying toys, putting on children's parties, and making Christmas baskets for the needy are the kind of jobs that need the woman's touch?" The Lions all thought that was a grand idea!

So, on December 4, 1951, the Head Lion and Mrs. Ethel Brant gathered the ladies together at the Pasadena Golf Club and, after feeding them well, told them how much better off the men Lions would be if the ladies would help. They were happy to organize the Auxiliary right then and chose Viegne Jenkins as temporary Chairlady and Flo Fussell as temporary Secretary (she later became the first President). Barbara Mac-



Neill became Welfare Chairlady and Lucille Jellison was in charge of the Christmas party. Other charter members included Betty Barrs, Grace D'Amato, Marge Dudinsky, Cassie Moyle, Mary and Dee Dwight, Mae Herne, Lola Tatten, Nellie Whitworth, Clair Duval, Ruth Geldhert, Helen Morris, Helen Mahagan, Emma Pollard, and Helen Sullivan. A new group was born and hasn't yet stopped working!

We helped give the Christmas party for all Gulfport children until Gulfport outgrew our capabilities, but we have kept on dressing dolls for the Christmas Toy Shop, or buying dolls for it.

By 1953 we were in high gear and purchased our first eye-screening machine and tested 350 students at Boca Ciega High School. This became a big operation, extending to 23 schools and banks and mobile home parks. Later, the Auxiliary bought four Goodlite Eye Screening machines and four Dioptic Lens Glasses for screening children. All are still in use today, but with the CETA funding and screening today, we mainly work in church schools only.

To earn money for our projects we have held card parties, dances, auctions, raffles, rummage sales, fall hoedowns, and spring dinner-dances. During the late '50s and '60s we were involved with the Sheriff's Boys' Ranch and all of us were made honorary members of the Ranch. We worked with Red Cross, Community Center for the Blind, and have maintained the concession at Little League Field.

We sponsor the Girl Scouts in Gulfport, contribute to the Free Clinic, STRAIGHT, Epilepsy Foundation, and furnished over 300 large print and memorial books to our beautiful Gulfport Library. We also give to the Florida Lions' Leader Dog Program, the Lions' Camp for the Visually Handicapped in Lake Wales, WUSF Radio Reading Service to provide radio adapters for the blind.

We assist in the Club's monthly Glaucoma Clinic in our clubhouse and the Labor Day "Miss Gulfport Beauty Pageant and Fish Fry." We try to help the needy during the year as well as at Christmastime. We purchased the Wurlitzer piano, the ice machine, and much of the other furniture in our clubhouse.

As Gulfport has grown, we too have grown, and we feel sure that Male Lion Bill MacNeill and Lady Lion Ethel Brant lived happily ever after, knowing they had shared the starting of such an active and outstanding pride of Lady Lions.

—Doris Brown

## GULFPORT LIONS CLUB

Chartered in June 1948, this is the oldest continuously operating civic-type club in the City of Gulfport. Like all Lions Clubs worldwide, it has two major objectives, both depending upon volunteer work by its members — support Lions national, state, and local sight conservation work, and support worthwhile local causes.

Early in 1947, a member of the St. Petersburg Beach Lions Club met with Gulfport contractors, Bill Herne and Mert Barrs to discuss the idea that Gulfport had grown to the point where a local Lions Club was needed. About the same time, a member of the St. Petersburg Lions Club and local mechanical engineer, Bart Saalfrank, were talking about the same subject. These talks led to invitations to other Gulfport citizens to attend a series of meetings, first at Herne and Barrs' contracting office, later at Bell's Corner Restaurant, and at the then Community Center (now Scout Hall). At these meetings, State and District Lions officials explained the benefits and the responsibilities of Lions Clubs, and the obligations of Club members. Eventually, more than the required 20 signatures were obtained on a Charter application, which was granted by Lions International in June, 1948.

Charter Night and Installation of first Officers was held at the Pasadena Golf Clubhouse on July 10, 1948. Club Sponsor was James Woodhouse of the St. Petersburg Beach Club and Master of Ceremonies was E. B. "Sunshine" Brandt of the St. Petersburg Lions Club. The Gulfport's new Charter was presented by Lions District Governor, Robert C. Halgrim, and accepted by the Club's first President, Richard H. Hern.

First Officers and Charter Members of the Gulfport Lions Club were:

**OFFICERS:** Richard H. Hern, President; Dewey T. Morris, First Vice President; Theodore Fussell, Second Vice President; Martin V. Ahl, Secretary/Treasurer; Samuel A. Moyle, Lion Tamer; and Howard J. Snyder, Tail Twister.

**DIRECTORS:** John A. Barrett, William L. Herne, Thomas J. Bell, Sr., and Merton F. Barrs.

**MEMBERS:** William J. Bell, John Dudinsky, Norman W. Haines, Edward E. Duval, Ralph Koenig, Edwin S. Markham, William MacNeill, Sam T. Papps, Raymond N. Porter, Arthur W. Stephens, R. Malcolm Whitworth, James B. Geldert, Harry C. McCrae, Walter S. Most, M. Bartlett Sealfrank, and Francis G. Weiss.

Then, as now, the Club's membership is a representative cross-section of Gulfport's business, professional, and civic leaders. Nowadays the membership includes many retirees. Membership averages around 60.

The Gulfport Lions Club has always been a "dinner club," meeting twice each month. The first regular meeting place was at Bell's Corner Restaurant. When the Club outgrew Bell's facilities, it moved to the Boca Ciega Inn during its open seasons and otherwise to the Pasadena Golf Clubhouse. In the mid-1950's a semi-permanent home for the Club was found at Sunset Beach Clubhouse of the St. Petersburg Beach Lions Club, which was used until the Club's own building was completed in July, 1967.

During the 38 years of its existence, the Club has raised hundreds of thousands of dollars and its members have devoted countless thousands of man-hours working toward its major objectives, which are:

**SIGHT CONSERVATION:** Florida Lions Foundation for the Blind, Florida Lions Eye Bank (transplants), Lions Summer Camp for Visually Handicapped Children, schools for the training of guide dogs and their humans, eye-care ranging from simple glasses to the most expensive eye surgery for Gulfport residents who could not otherwise afford it, plus other sight conservation work.

**LOCAL ACTIVITIES** (mostly youth-oriented): Gulfport Lions Little League, girls' and boys' softball, junior football, Boy Scouts, Cub Scouts, Girl Scouts. Junior College scholarships for local students. Christmas baskets for the local needy, Christmas parties for the children. For several years the Club sponsored "Gulfport Gala Days" — an annual, week-long festival of parades, dances, beauty contests, land and water sports events, water shows, and more. In its early days, the Club did much direct local welfare work, and it has occasionally donated items of needed equipment to some City department.

The money for all this giving has come from many projects. The largest single source has always been the Thursday evening Bingo held at the Casino almost continuously since the Club's founding. The idea for this project came from Lions John Barrett and Marty Hendley who served as Bingo Co-Chairmen for many years. Another major source of funds has been the sale of "Blind Seals" mailed annually to every Gulfport residence. Other sources have included the Labor Day Fish Fry, frequent pancake breakfasts at the clubhouse,



sponsor fees for participants in beauty contests, walkathons and the like, candy sales, Christmastime sales of fruit cake and children's coloring books.

The biggest single event in the Club's history since that Charter Night in 1948 was the dedication of the Club's own building on September 24, 1967. A group of Lions, including "Dee" Skinner, Jack Parker, and W. "Kay" Jamison worked for over a year with City Council toward obtaining a long-term lease on a piece of City-owned land at the Marina upon which to erect this building. Ground-breaking ceremonies were held early in 1966 with Gulfport Mayor John Robinson, Club President W. K. Jamison, First Vice-President Jack Parker (who was also Chairman of the Building Committee), and Lion District Governor Harris participating.

The building was financed through the Club's own resources and "no-interest" bonds purchased by members and others. Much of the actual construction work on the building was performed by Club members working under the supervision of Lion Bill Herne.

First use of the new building was for Installation Night on July 24, 1967, when Bert Williams was installed as Club President. Starting at that same time, the Club has donated use of the building every Tuesday to the County Health Department for operation of a Glaucoma and Diabetes Detection Clinic. Club members and members of the Auxiliary provide support services for the clinic.

This clubhouse is entirely supported and maintained by money from members' dues, from rentals and work by Club members. No money raised from the public for the Club's charitable work goes into it.

— Willard B. Simonds

#### SOURCES:

- 1) Lengthy taped interviews with W. L. Herne, R. H. Hern, M. F. Barrs, and W. J. Bell.
- 2) Informal conversations with N. W. Haines, M. V. Ahl, Jack Pollard, and others.
- 3) The Club's Charter, Constitution, and By-Laws.
- 4) Review of the Club's historical scrapbooks.
- 5) Personal knowledge gained over almost 25 years of Club Membership.

## KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS

### Pius II Council 5131

We received our Charter from Supreme Council, New Haven, Connecticut, dated April 23, 1961. There are 60 Charter members.

We first met in the old skating rink on 49th Street. Our first Chaplain was Father Frank Goodman, Pastor of Most Holy Name of Jesus Catholic Church, Gulfport. Jack Spatafore was our first Grand Knight of this new council. We moved to our present location — 4919 17th Avenue S. — in 1965.

We are currently operating in our 25th year as a chartered council. Plans are now being prepared in anticipation of celebrating our Silver Anniversary on April 23, 1986.

On behalf of our entire membership, 175 strong, I congratulate our fair City of Gulfport in attaining her Diamond Jubilee of 75 years. May she have many, many more happy and progressive years ahead.

fraternally

*Arthur W. Davis, GK*

## NEWCOMERS CLUB OF GULFPORT

The Conrad Powells moved to Gulfport on May 2, 1967, and shortly after they asked City Clerk Bernice Dopico to supply them with a list of names and addresses of newcomers so a club could be started. Bernice was most cooperative, thought theirs was a good idea, and she gave us monthly lists for some time. The first group of six grew rapidly and through the years has continued to function primarily as a welcoming club helping "outsiders" become "insiders."

Our first Officers were the Powells as President, the Van Dorns - Vice President, the Charles Speidels - Secretary, and the Machamers - Treasurer. At the annual meeting of 1968-69, we again elected couples for each office, Col. William and Mrs. Steiner heading the group.

Programs have varied, including early trips through City Hall, the Planetarium, the Museum of Art, and more; there have been picnics in many places and lots of holiday parties. During the last few years, Jesse and Hazel Squires have conducted us on frequent tours — to EPCOT, Disney World, Lake Okeechobee, and other Florida attractions. We have

had specialists teach us how to cook Southern style and how to grow Florida fruits, flowers, and vegetables.

At first the Club met at homes of members, but when we outgrew that we met in the Social Hall of the Methodist Church. This last year, when we passed our 17th birthday, we moved to the new GMSC where we continue to enjoy catered dinners monthly and exciting programs and fellowship. Now, with over 75 members, including the Powells who are Life members, we certainly do enjoy our times together.

The Newcomers Club has had twelve Presidents, and as the present one it gives me pleasure to help write this history and we believe that your perusal of our Scrapbook and other papers, especially those by Historian Wilde, will supplement our notes.

— *Leavitt L. Wood and Wilda Lakin*

### SENIOR CITIZENS' CLUB

The Senior Citizens' Club of Gulfport was founded in 1960 with 15 people present at a meeting held in a store near the Post Office. Charter members were: R. Albertson, J. Billings, E. Cotton, J. Griffin, M. Schmidt, B. Brandauer, J. Stohmidel, E. Millaly, and E. Whitney. The first President was Mrs. Alice Kittelburger, and the second was Mr. Max Ulrich. Meetings were held in the Old Community Hall on 28th Avenue S. As the Club grew, it moved to the Coast Guard Building, then to the Casino, then to the Community Center, and most recently (1985), to the Gulfport Multi-Purpose Senior Center, except for the dances on first Mondays at the Casino. Other Mondays, business meetings will be held with sing-alongs led by Bill Mahoney with Elsie Miscovic at the piano and, as usual, the card-playing follows.

Throughout the years, this group has maintained a friendly attitude toward one another and their guests — a warm feeling of fellowship pervades each meeting. Many must use canes, but all come with a smile and a song in their hearts as they greet long-time friends. Membership has varied from about 400 to about half that number now.

The Club has given donations to several local churches and homes, but primarily it is a social group promoting fellowship and a caring attitude. Last Christmas, members enjoyed the first of what may become an annual affair — a dinner subsidized from the treasury. Another recent innovation was a Trash Party held on the beach; Sophia Jensen was chosen



Queen of the Day.

Dues remain \$2.00 a year and payment for light refreshment makes possible a small balance. Bus trips are exceedingly popular — conducted during recent years by Mr. and Mrs. Jesse Squires (Hazel). Such outings broaden everyone's horizons and contribute deeply to the enjoyment of life both during the event and later as they remember.

We hope those interested in our programs will join us as visitors if not members, to see how much security and pleasure we receive from one another as we live in our beloved Gulfport.

Note: A history of the Senior Citizens' Club was written by a former President, Mabel Mayne, and it is available in our Library for your reading pleasure.

— *Hazel Squires, Mary Konz,  
and Others*

### WOMAN'S CLUB OF GULFPORT

Within a few days of Pearl Harbor, 1941, nine residents of Gulfport met at Sunny Manor (now Cedars) and planned to organize a Red Cross sewing group to help in the war effort. They also stated concerns about local community improvements and agreed they might well become a permanent organization. In January, 1942, they began to meet at the Community Hall which had been designated by the City as a sewing center. Mrs. Stella Tamm remembers working with her mother, Mrs. Ralph Uptegrave (Abigail) to maintain and increase this group which later became the Woman's Club. The first President was Mrs. G. S. McAfee and since then 27 have served in that capacity. Mrs. Bradley Layburn (Clarice) is the incumbent.

True to their early objectives, programs have included talks about local welfare agencies, trips to Bay Pines V.A. Hospital, to PARC, and to museums. At first they had departments of Fine Arts, Education, and Civic Affairs; but all worked together to support fund-raising for scholarships given to Boca Ciega graduates, for gifts to Little League, the Library, and several health agencies.

"Fashions of Long Ago," featuring gowns and children's clothing from 1800 to 1926, initiated an annual custom of style shows still popular today; we now combine the fashion show with card parties. Irma Newman, who was President twice, recalls they had nearly 75 tables of players at the

Casino when they first publicized concerns about giving scholarships for Gulfport high school graduate girls.

During the early days, each President could designate her favorite project which would receive \$200, and this diversified money services nicely. Bus, water and land trips to health agencies were popular, and membership grew to 146 in fifteen years. Federated from the start with the Florida Federation of Women's Clubs, the Woman's Club of Gulfport withdrew in November 1956 and remained outside for four years — a fact deeply regretted now when suitable recognition for services of 44 years can be claimed by FFWC as only 25- continuity was broken!

Historian Gertrude Tunan stated that at the close of its 25th year, with 125 members, they had given generously not only to many youth groups previously mentioned, but had raised nearly \$3,000 for a clubhouse. By then their Choral group had given many concerts locally and at both County and State Federations. A later Historian, Ruth Ann Ramsey, described "The Gulfettes" in detail in 1956.

Programs flourished in hospitals and retirement and nursing homes where holidays were brightened by these visiting club-women with gifts and goodies. The Hope Award, a silver tray, was given to the Club for outstanding work at PARC in 1962. A second scholarship was started at St. Petersburg Junior College, \$100 was given to two more health agencies, and \$200 to the City for card tables for the new Community Center.

The 25th Birthday Party was celebrated at the Center and honored Past Presidents and Charter Members, including Mrs. Stella Tamm, Mrs. Jessie Brozka, and members from local clubs serving as FFWC officers.

During the '70s, the Woman's Club continued its dedicated services to community groups, to selected FFWC and GFWC projects and programs. Of special interest have been Hacienda Girls' Ranch, Special Olympics, and increasing our scholarships (now three).

In 1978, Mrs. Frederick S. Allen (Florence) selected, trained, and introduced "The Ensemble" which is now known as "The Music Makers" — who enthrall audiences with their artistically sung variety of music. Donations to that group are used only for their music — they bear other expenses individually. All volunteer work is primarily rewarded by the satisfaction that one has helped another toward a more contented life and has learned a fuller appreciation of

his/her own talents and gifts.

Several revisions have kept the Bylaws of the local Club in conformity with the Departments and Divisions of FFWC, the better to implement and report programs selected for local use. Topics presented during meetings (held second Wednesday afternoons, October through April, at the Community Center) are suggested by either FFWC or GFWC and reported to the parent organizations. Volunteer work is done in small groups or by individuals. Hundreds of hours and dollars are contributed annually in service to youth groups, our Library, and to people in hospitals, nursing homes, and in support of Neighborly Senior Services offered in our community.

Membership hovers around 100, and many regularly attend District 14 FFWC and other FFWC meetings. One member served as Club President, District Director, and now serves as Chairman of the Standing Committee of FFWC.

The Woman's Club of Gulfport exists "to stimulate interest in the arts, education, and civic improvements" as it started out to do in 1941.

— *Frances Purdy*, Historian



*First trolley to Gulfport — February 10, 1915*





*In 1916 a group of women of Gulfport organized to promote beautification of Gulfport. They called themselves the Town Improvement League. Their main project was to place benches along the trolley line and beautify the grounds along the track.*



*Mack Brooks, on bicycle  
in front of first Post Office.*



*Early Real Estate office.*

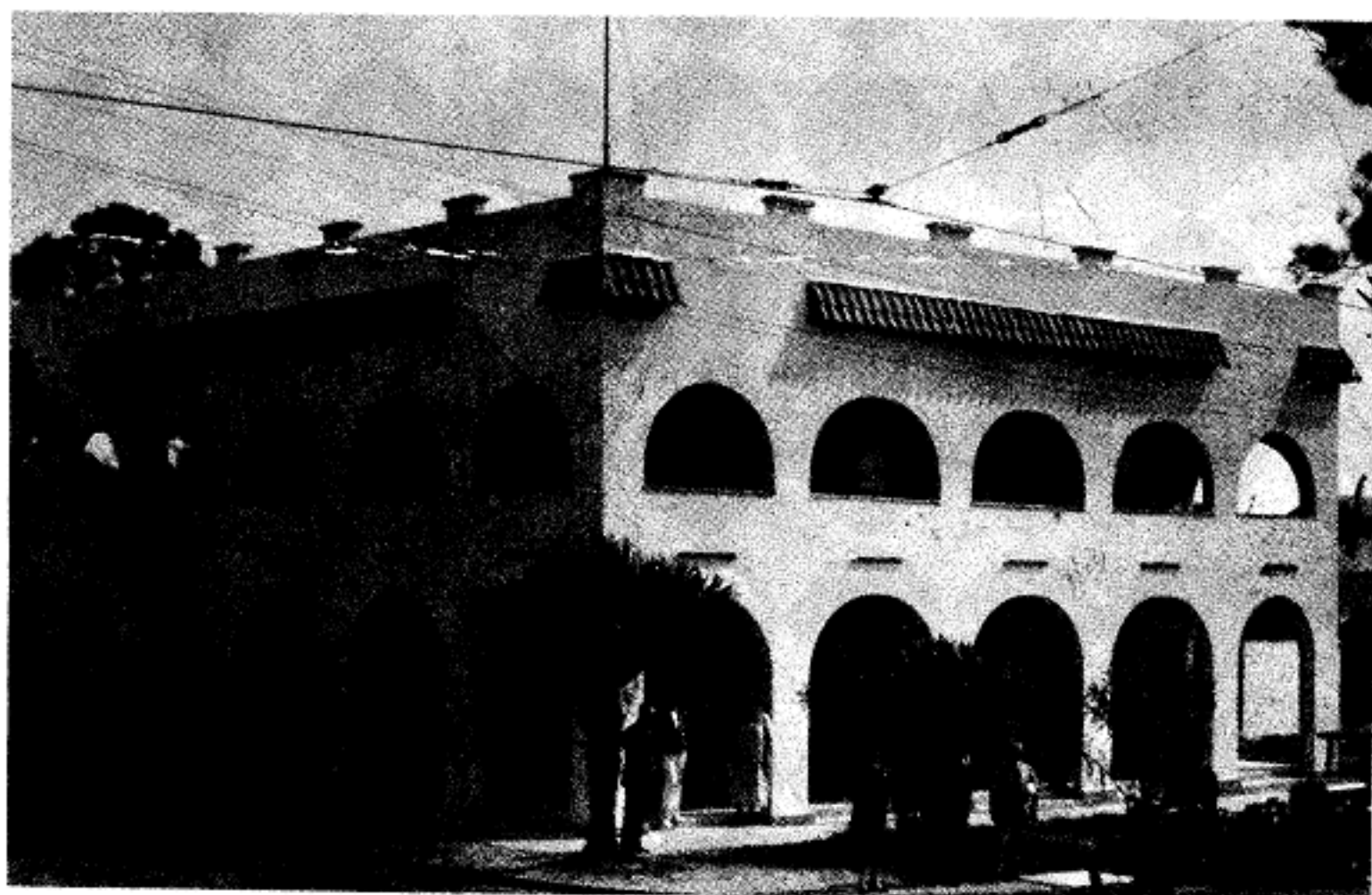


*Irving Slaughter (inset) served as a deckhand on the ferry Gypsy. A house is shown behind the ferry in this early 1900's photo*

*Courtesy St. Petersburg Times*

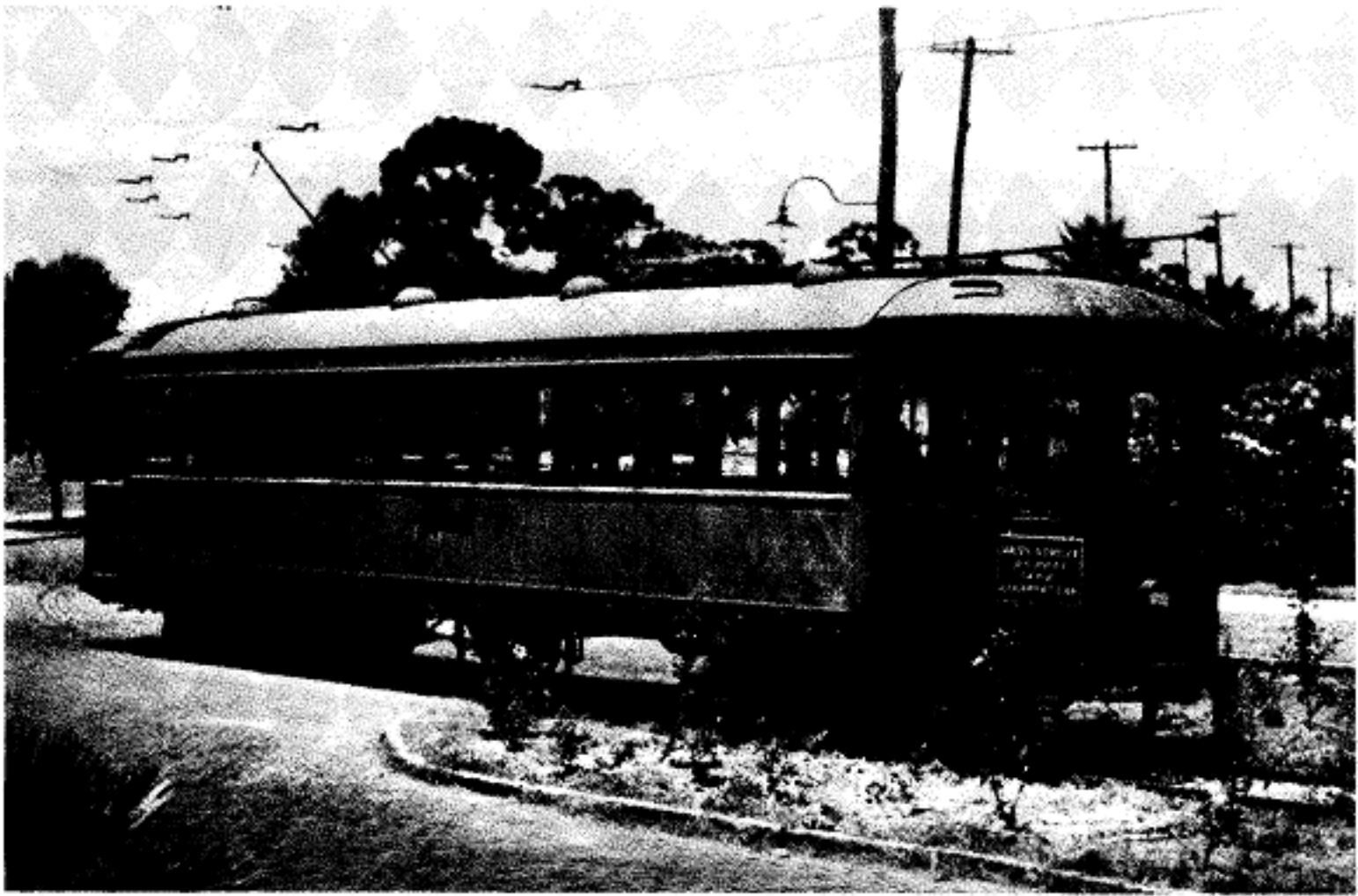


*On end of Gulfport Pier, 1925*



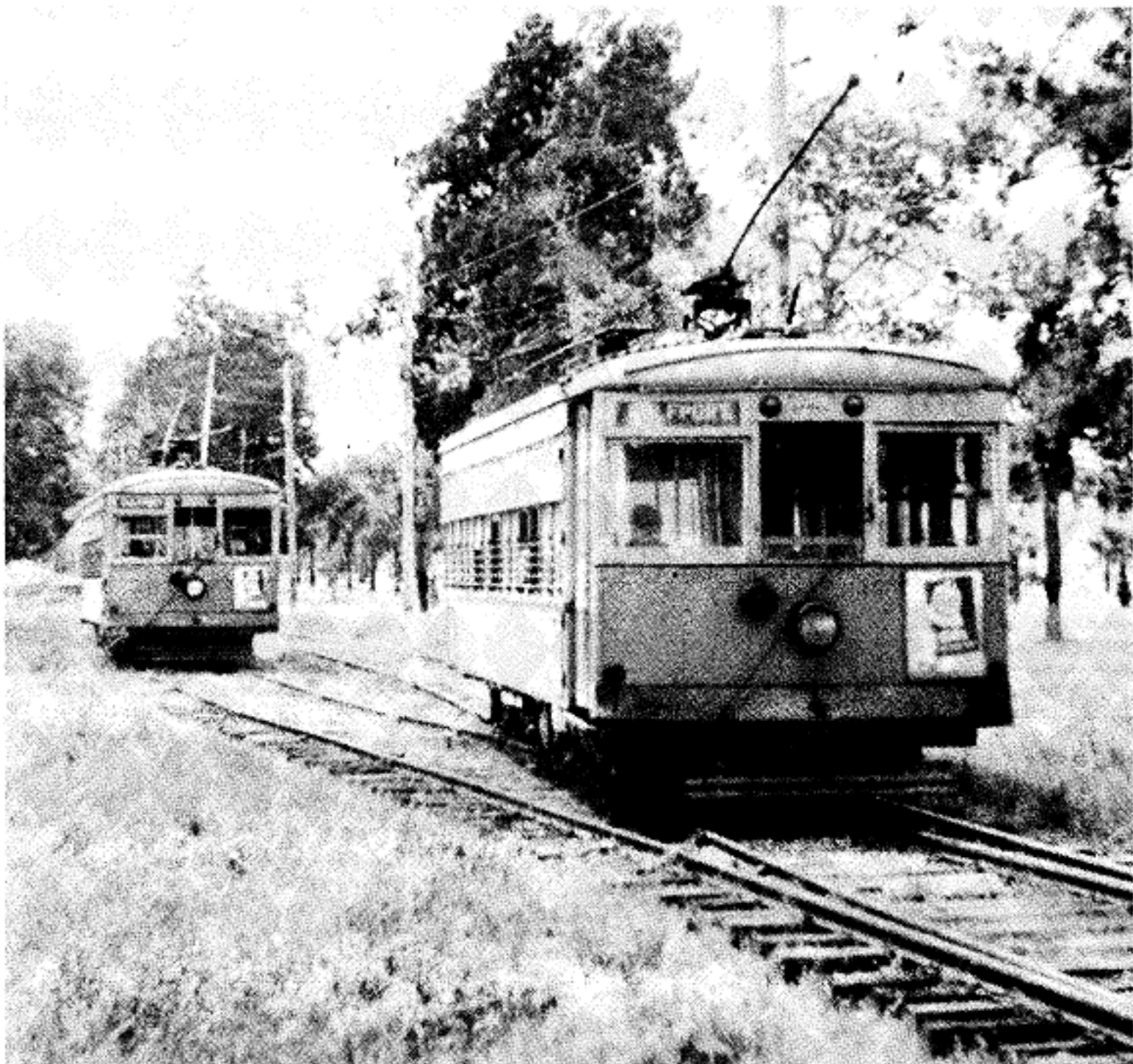
*Holiday Inn, 1926*





*Pasadena-Gulfport Street Car, 1924*

Hampton Dunn collection



*St. Petersburg Municipal Railway cars passing on Beach Blvd. at Gulfport Blvd., 1926 (location is now part of Clymer Park).*

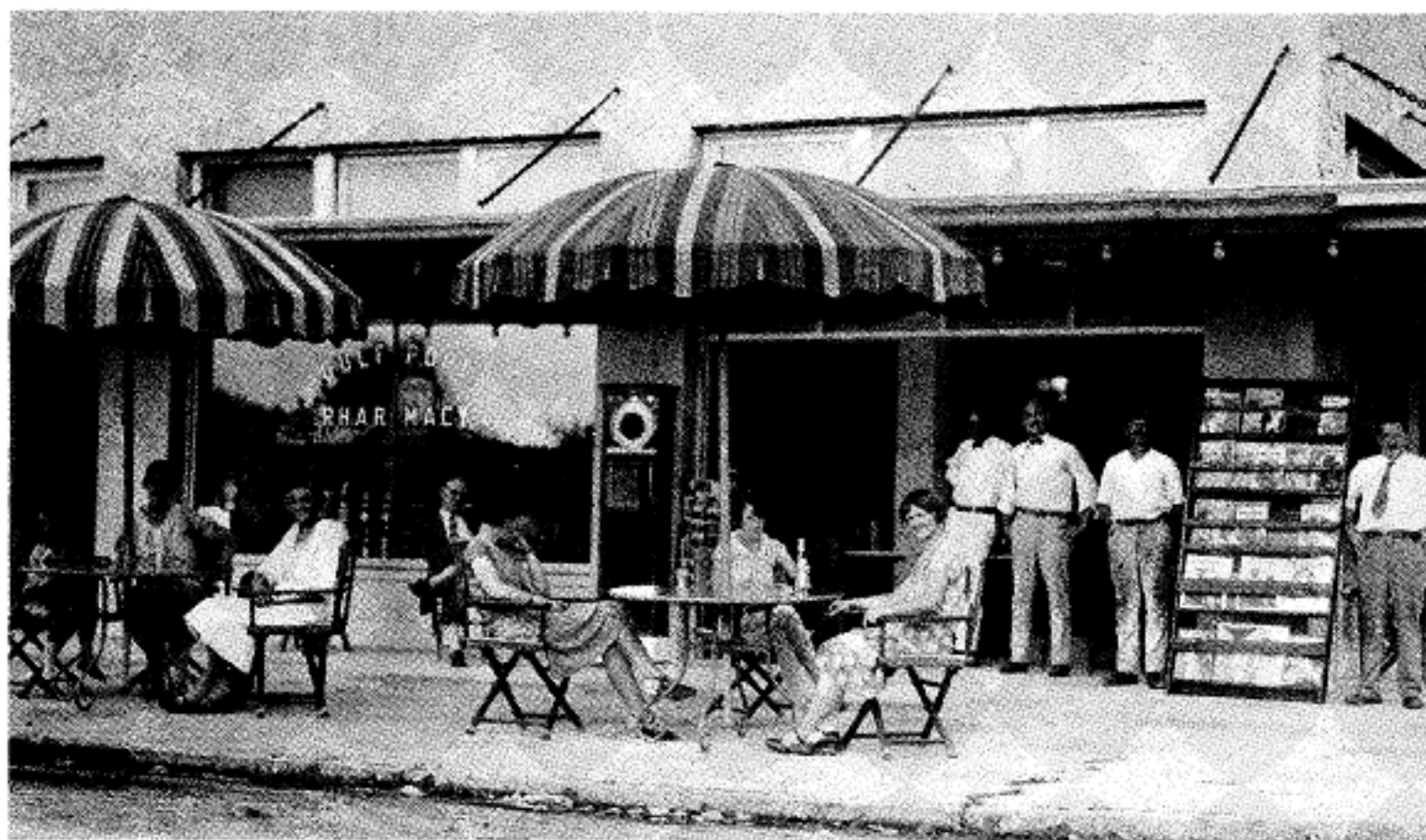
— Robert F. Torbett, collection of W. B. Simonds



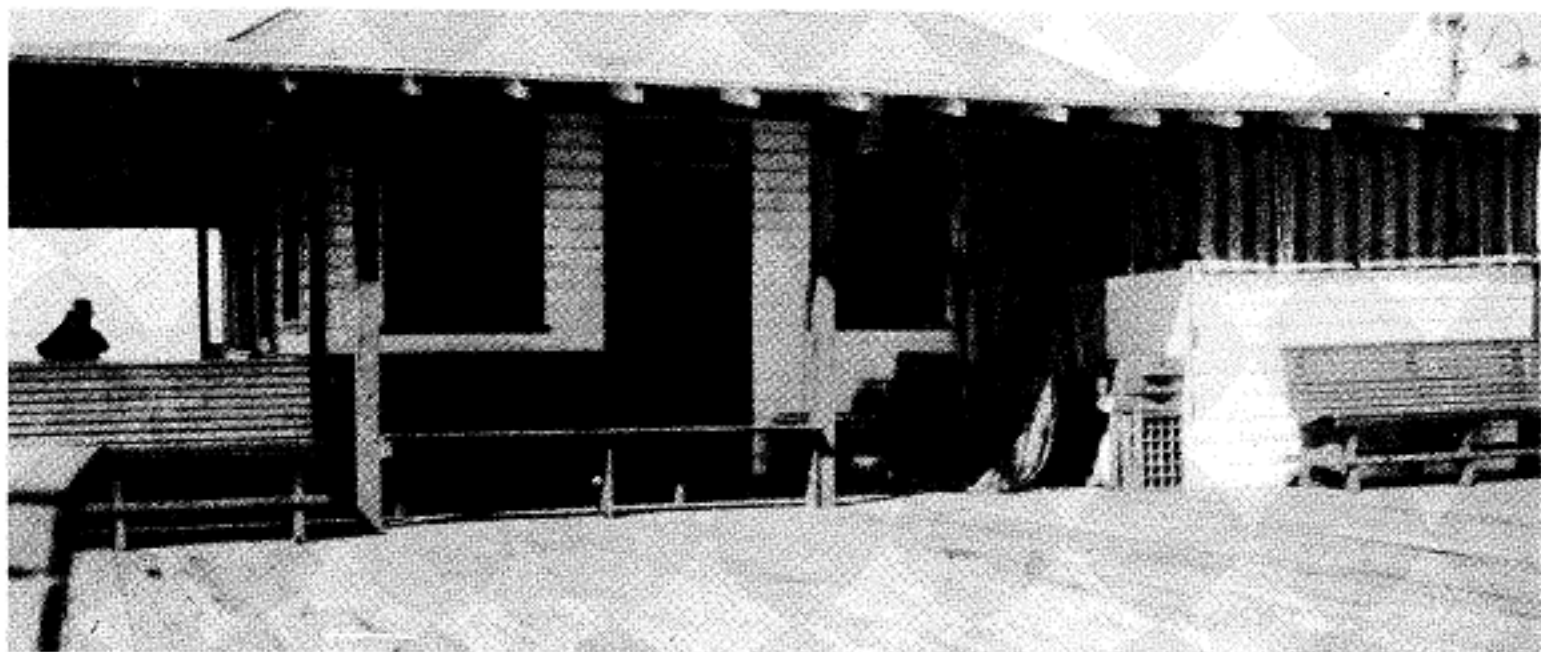


*Between Pier and Casino, about 1926-27.*

Photo by Harry C. Thorne



*Corner drug store on Beach Blvd. This picture was taken about 1926. It was a successful drug store for many years and the delicious sodas always attracted folks to stop and enjoy. It is now an antique store.*



*Gulfport Pier — 1927-28*



*School "Toy Orchestra" - 2nd grade, April 1929.*



**MARY LOU GRAY**  
*principal of Gulfport  
Elementary School for  
34 years, retiring in 1953.*

*Prize tarpon caught by Mr. Thorne and displayed proudly by his daughters, Kathryn and Marie Wilson Thorne. The fish were caught in Gulfport waters and weighed 130 lbs. and 55 lbs.*







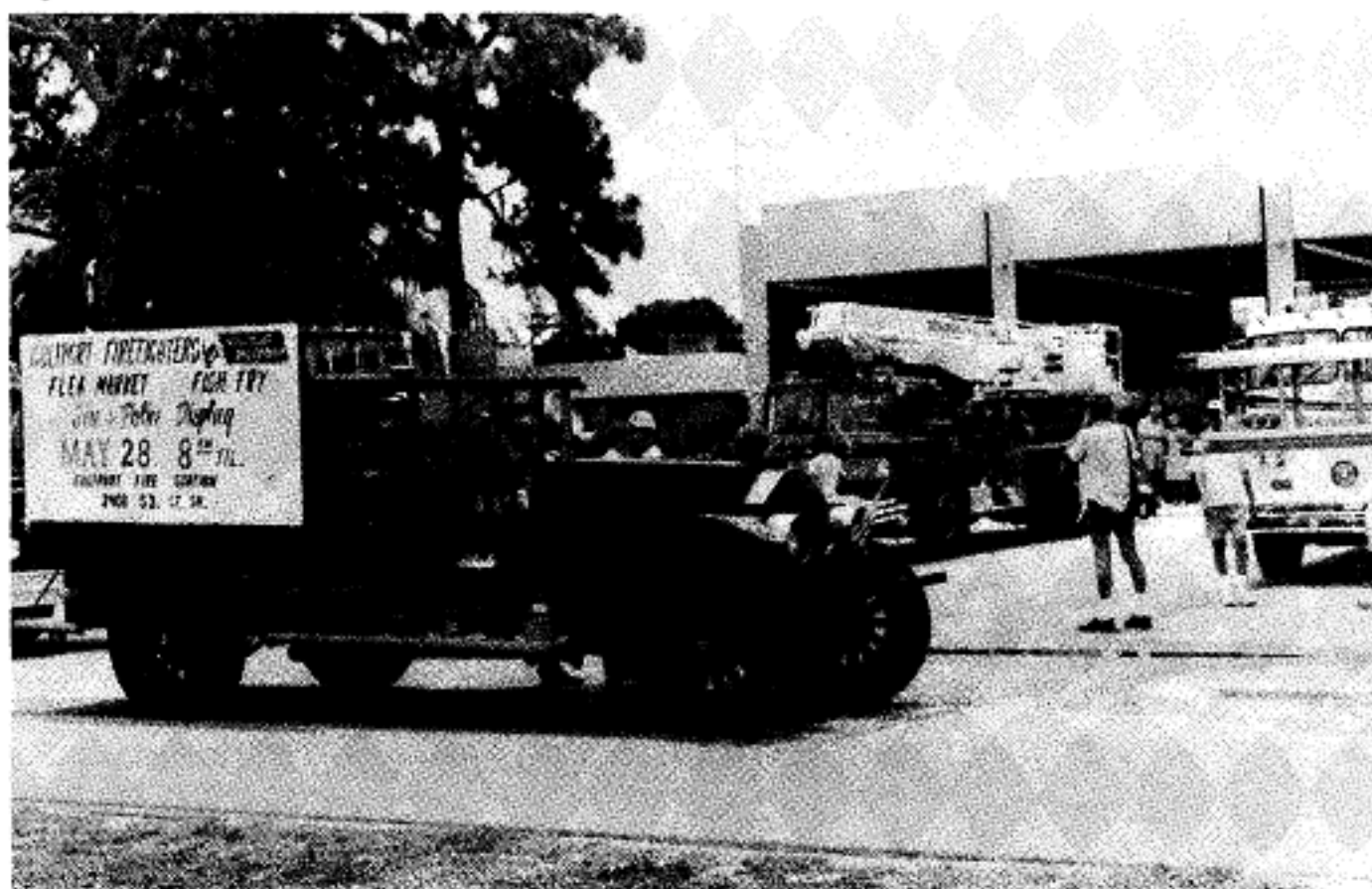
*The Garden Club of Gulfport was organized February 1942 with Mrs. Stella Tamm as first president. Pictured above is a group ready to go to work on the annual petunia planting along the Boulevard leading to the Casino. Standing next to the sign in the white yachting cap is Capt. "Walt" Williams, long-time Mayor of Gulfport and much loved by all. Also pictured along with the news story is one of the yard displays of many in this most interesting yard beautification contest staged by the Garden Club. It created quite a contest among the gardeners of the town.*





*Lawrence Renney,  
first Marshal of Gulfport,  
also first Fire Chief, 1925.  
Picture taken in 1953 when  
Mr. Renney was 70 years old.*

donated by H.R. Cecil Slauter



*Gulfport Police Department*



*1st Fire Dept.*



*Beach Blvd. and Shore Blvd.*



# **Daily Living, Then and Now**



## CHAPTER 10

### WHAT ABOUT HOUSING?

One of the most exciting characteristics of Gulfport is the variety in structure of its houses and, of course, the kinds of family life they protect. Predominantly, one finds the "little fishing cottage" in the older parts of town. Many of these have been enlarged and otherwise improved through the years and by several ownerships. The very earliest homes were built of local timber by the owners and with the help of their neighbors.

Built well but simply, these houses are of wood resistant to native wildlife and they have been strong enough to accept porches, second floors, new flooring, even tiling, air-conditioning, and ceiling fans without collapse. Many of the old flowering shrubs and century plants continue to live in what was known as "Hibiscus Garden" in the Tangerine area. Rose Ada Hudson and her husband built at 5310 21st Avenue S. and she said that she has lived there ever since (from 1935). There was no other house within three blocks, but now it is surely congested! Eric Kierca and Roy Parks built many houses after the war and Rose's husband did lots of their plastering. Mostly though, John Hudson collected scallops till dark, cleaned them, and very early in the morning took them by trolley to the City where he sold them for 25 cents a pint. Sam Thompson helped him and they worked where Town Shores is now. They left his wife home one morning when she was almost at term with their first child, and she felt bad because they thought she couldn't work with them as usual! Both of those men worked also for the Chief of Police — cutting lawns and other chores for the usual wage of 25 cents an hour or less. Five dollars was enough rent for a fairly good house, and for five hundred you could buy one! They sold the lot next door for \$200 to pay their paving assessment. One of the primary concerns those days was to locate a house away from the waterfront far enough to be out of flooding possibilities yet near enough to have easy access to the life-sustaining occupation of fishing.

Houses on the grander scale have been built by northern visitors who returned to stay. They are apt to be the three-bedroom, two-bath, two-car garage type with pool and a boat on a trailer in the driveway or in a nearby marina in Gulfport or at Pinellas Point. One of the first to buy a lot and build on our waterfront were Dr. and Mrs. Marcy who first lived on

29th Avenue. Their friend, Dr. Sackett, had encouraged them to come here from Buffalo, and his wife interested them in property where Mrs. McLaren continues to live. She said her husband wanted to surprise her with the gift of the lot and a half, which he got for \$3,500, but a friend told her! In 1950 they had Roy Parks build their house on the lot. The one west of theirs stood empty for two years until the Passmans came from Connecticut. That house had been furnished most attractively for this area, but when they sold to the Bashaws, they replaced it with their own selections. They paid \$22,000 for it and others, realizing the value of a dead-end street, moved in. Colonel and Mrs. William E. Kerns bought the lot and house east of the Marcy's, built by Glissner in 1956, for \$8,000 plus \$49,000 — evidence of the boom! Several others moved in before 1957. Joseph Pestano bought the "Hawaiian House" which had been designed and built in 1954 by the Coxsons — he had been a School Superintendent in Hawaii. The Pestanos replaced all their furnishings and the Oriental garden which had been widely acclaimed. He paid about as much to alter the property as he had to buy it — \$21,000. Today each of these properties could be sold for several times their original price.

In the early days, people feared the wildness of the Bay — and today we have a healthy respect for it and pray for continuing absence of hurricanes! It is the wise waterfront dweller who heeds advice from "Hurricane Preparedness" experts. Following a recent heavy rain, a seawall in front of one of the properties just described cost \$12,000 for repairs!

Another part of our town was described by Jessie Brozka who remembers when she came to live on 27th Avenue in 1919. There was no pier then, but people bought fish as the men brought them in at the waterfront. Only three houses had been built near their location, and she and her husband were considered a bit crazy to settle "so far out in the country." Ray Parks built their house and one next door for \$4,300 and \$4,800 respectively.

Gulfport includes people of many lifestyles — those who live in houses like those described above; those who have chosen apartment living either in small or large complexes; and those who are special because they preserve their ethnic background by clustering often in a geographic section near their church, the beach or other focus of their attention. We have asked representatives of these large groups to tell us why they like living here, what attracted them in the first place,

and to describe activities they most enjoy and believe Gulfport can especially offer to them.

### Some Comments About Our Neighbors from Lithuania

On February 16, 1985, it was an exciting privilege to participate in the raising of the flag of Lithuania at our Library. Many gathered in their beautiful native costumes to mark this honorable occasion, and the following is part of the address given by C. S. Cheleden:

"On February 16, 1918, a representative body of Lithuanian patriots signed and issued the Lithuanian Declaration of Independence from Russia. This being the 67th anniversary of that publication, we have assembled here today in Gulfport (and in each other municipality in this area) . . . and with those who share our heritage throughout the world . . . to commemorate this Declaration and to renew our faith in the future independence of our nation. . . . We thank Mayor Jay P. Clymer for granting us the opportunity to hold this public demonstration which we hope will bring our cause to the attention of our fellow Americans."

It was later my pleasure to interview Mrs. Victoria T. Jacobson, their public relations person, in her home. Primarily I asked her to tell us why so many Lithuanians have settled in this area and to share her description of their beautiful flag with us. In part, this is what she told me.

The weather was one factor, but more important, Gulfport people lived close together and were neighborly — as they had been in their homeland. Prices of houses were reasonable and they felt they were moving into a community of warm-hearted people — clean-living people who care for their properties, their families, their flowers and their little gardens. They maintain high standards of cleanliness even though they do not have much money — very few, if any, are ever on welfare for they squeeze each penny, know how to spend wisely, and they help one another. The flag is a symbol of independence from Russia: she sees the yellow as being the wheat and flax fields and the sunny disposition of her countrymen in spite of having the heavy foot of Russia upon them. Green is for the tall pines of everlasting hope, and red — for the blood shed and still being shed for the freedom of their homeland.

Mrs. Jacobson described their university, opened in 1579,



200 years before Moscow had one. Lithuania's gold is her amber. Many thousands of years ago, the pine trees gave off their resin which fell into the churning Baltic Sea and with the salt water formed what we know today as amber. (She told a delightful fairy tale she shared with a group of small children who visited their booth at a folk fair — and you can hear it if you'll listen to her tape in our Museum.) The Lithuanian language is the oldest living language, dating back to Sanskrit. Many Americans don't know these facts. She put their flag in our State Capitol — the first ethnic flag to fly there. She has asked for, and received, annual proclamations from all local municipalities. Now her ambition is to enlarge the apparent scope of the U.S. Holocaust Museum by having it renamed the U.S. Captive Nations Holocaust Museum, and she will go to Washington to plead her cause. She believes Lithuanians mind their own business and participate in community elections and other city events. They especially like our beach and its social happenings attract them for they were brought up by the Baltic Sea. They are a proud people, justifiably so!

Mrs. Jacobson used to drive back and forth from Duxbury to Treasure Island for 35 years with the family who adopted her. Her "Daddy" was a chemical engineer, a graduate from M.I.T. who had sugar mills all over the country. His hideaway was near Blind Pass. Seminole Indians used to work for him and would say, "Me like heap hot water, me paint, work hard, no money, just heap hot water" — he had lots of rum! There were no bridges from the mainland then and Mrs. Jacobson used to ride boats. She came to live in this vicinity in 1950.

Mrs. Jacobson wants to say her thanks to the wonderfully helpful girls in our Library for being so kind about taking care of the Lithuanian flag and for helping them find books either in their language or ours. She speaks for the Knights of Lithuania, a worldwide organization whose membership in this area is about 100 (the chapter is only eight years old). There are about 500 members in the local American-Lithuanian Club, and there is a second such club but their philosophy is different. She was one of the first thirteen who organized SPIFFS (St. Petersburg International Folk Fair Society), and she recalled helping with the first Parade of States when, with Ukrainians and other groups, they carried their flag with black streamers flying from the pole to show their anguish about their homeland's situation. She asks us to

pray with them for their homeland. And then she played two polkas for me on her harmonicas!

— *Victoria T. Jacobson, Frances Purdy*

### Russians in Gulfport

The City of Gulfport has the largest community of Russian-Americans in Florida and is the locale of the only Russian cultural center in the southeastern United States.

The first Russian emigres came to Pinellas County more than a century ago. The eminent artist and sculptor Fedor Kamensky settled in Clearwater in 1871. At the 1893 World's Fair in Chicago, Kamensky directed the artistic ornamentation of many of the exhibit pavilions of various nations. The architect, Ivan Filippov, also settled in Clearwater, in 1883, where he built the Capitol Theatre, the Scranton Hotel, the City Hall, and other structures.

In 1888, the Russian emigre Peter Demens (Dementieff) completed construction of the railroad between Sanford and St. Petersburg. In deference to his wish, the city adjacent to Gulfport was named St. Petersburg in homage to Demens' native city of St. Petersburg in Imperial Russia.

A number of Russian-Americans began to settle in Gulfport after the revolution in Russia and were joined by a great many more after World War II. They were attracted here by the balmy climate of Florida, the quiet shady Gulfport streets gracing small homes, the nearby well-kept beach, the orderly community, and the City of Gulfport's excellent administration of minimal fare mini-bus transportation for senior citizens.

To fulfill their spiritual needs, the Russian-Americans in Gulfport built a typically Russian-style, complete with cupolas, Russian Orthodox church — St. Andrews on 15th Avenue South. There is also a group of Russian Baptists in Gulfport, members of the Slavic Evangelical Baptist Church.

In 1970, a resident of the Russian ethnic community, Professor A. Sokolsky of the University of South Florida, proposed the founding of a club to foster the cultural riches of his countrymen. The Russian American Club was organized with Professor Sokolsky as its first president. From its very inception, the club has been extremely active in presenting vocal and instrumental concerts, established the Russian singing ensemble "Volga" which makes frequent public appearances, holds informative lectures by local and visiting

intellectuals, and organizes festive balls.

Inasmuch as it has not yet been in a position to build its own premises, the Russian American Club is gratefully using the Multi-Purpose Senior Center for its meetings, and rents the Gulfport Community Center for its larger programs.

It should be noted that Professor Sokolsky expended a great deal of effort in getting St. Petersburg City officials to authenticate that the Russian emigre Peter Demens was a founder of St. Petersburg, and the Demens Landing Park was finally ceremoniously dedicated on October 20, 1977.

The Russian American Club was one of the first thirteen ethnic groups to become members of SPIFFS, organized in 1975, and was immediately included in the plans of the St. Petersburg Committee for the celebration of America's 200th anniversary. The first International Folk Festival was held at the end of February, 1976, and since then is held annually for three days the latter part of February with 40+ nationalities now represented. The Russian American Club has actively participated every year in this major event.

As members of SPIFFS, the Russian American Club continues to further its educational pursuits by speaking before student groups, upon invitation, on subjects of history, literature, and other pertinent ethnic matters. This useful work is carried out by members of the club without remuneration purely as a means of sharing their rich heritage with neighboring communities.

— *Paul N. Paganuzzi,*  
*Prof. Emeritus, U. of Vermont;*  
*Olga Milin*

### **“Town Shores” — An Interview with Mr. Herman Geller**

It seemed appropriate to invite Herman Gellen to share his reasons for building the large Town Shores complex. Here is that interview: Mr. Frederick S. Allen is the interviewer:

Mr. A: How exactly did Town Shores come into being, Mr. Geller?

Mr. G: I had been living and building in the Miami area for years since about 1963. I had always had visions of building whole communities, not just individual buildings.

Mr. A: Did you have any particular location in mind?

Mr. G: Yes. It had to be on the waterfront, in a good location easily accessible, with condominiums reasonably priced.

Mr. A: How did you choose Gulfport for your dream?

Mr. G: In 1970, I think it was, Julius Green and I dis-



covered the area on Boca Ciega Bay which was owned by Maurice Hollins. He also owned Pasadena Golf Club. The sea walls around the property were already in place. This was a great advantage. Dredge and fill were not necessary.

Mr. A: Was Mr. Hollins interested in selling you the property?

Mr. G: Not at first. I think he had an idea that he would leave the land to his grandchildren.

Mr. A: Did you encounter any difficulties in getting your project underway?

Mr. G: We certainly did at first. The land we wanted was not in Gulfport but in the County where the density was limited. So we asked to be annexed to the City of Gulfport.

Mr. A: Did the request for annexation and approval of your long-range plan take much time to complete?

Mr. G: Yes, indeed it did. It took about a year and a half to present our design layout and detailed plans, as well as our request to be annexed, to the Gulfport City Council. They were very cooperative and realized the value of what Town Shores could do for the City. I attended nearly every Council meeting during that time, explaining and answering questions. The Council jokingly said they were going to install a 'special chair' for me since I was a regular participant!

Mr. A: Were there specific problems you had to overcome?

Mr. G: There certainly were. One was the problem of sewers. The City felt that the drain on their present sewer lines would overburden them. So the County, using general funds to start, allowed me to hook up to the Bear Creek Sewer System, which is completely separate from the rest of Gulfport.

Mr. A: What was the first building you completed in Town Shores?

Mr. G: It was Avalon House. We built a three-story building with a variety of different sized apartments at moderate prices. My dream and my long-range plan was to build four, six-story and high rises with waterfront and water view. Each building was an improvement over the previous one, creating a gracious style of living at correspondingly higher costs.

Mr. A: Did Gulfport benefit from this large complex?

Mr. G: Of course it did. By increased water and sewer revenues, by property taxes and, perhaps most important of all, by prestige. The owners of the new apartments added a new dimension to Gulfport. They took part in all facets of the City. They voted, they used the Library, they joined many

clubs and organizations.

Mr. A: How did you decide on the name 'Town Shores'?

Mr. G: All my projects have the word 'Town' in them. This meant a lot to me. For example: Town Apartments North, Five Towns, and Town Shores. The name indicated that it was not just another group of buildings but a town on the shore of Boca Ciega Bay. Now it is a community of about 1,400 families, most of them retired.

Mr. A: Were there any restrictions?

Mr. G: Only a few — such as no small children living there. This does not mean that grandchildren can't visit, but it is primarily an adult community.

Mr. A: You built a large recreation hall, four swimming pools, shuffleboard and tennis courts for the complex. What else did you provide?

Mr. G: Our maintenance contracts, based on the size of each apartment, were the best ever offered. A monthly fee includes all the hot water needed, natural gas for heating and cooking, as well as the maintenance of the grounds and exterior of the seventeen buildings. Also coin laundries.

Mr. A: Anything else you can think of?

Mr. G: I was able to assist in the building of a shopping center adjoining Town Shores, with a grocery store, beauty shop, barber shop, and a restaurant for our owners.

Mr. A: Now that your dream of Town Shores is a reality, what's next?

Mr. G: I am still going strong with other projects like Terrace Park of Five Towns with about 1,700 units and more going up. Also we are building the Silver Sands Beach and Raquet Club in St. Petersburg Beach. My son Bob is working hard on this magnificent project.

Mr. A: Don't you feel a sense of accomplishment?

Mr. G: Yes, I do. It is a real satisfaction to have contributed to a better standard of living for so many families, and making Gulfport and Town Shores a 'jewel' for thousands to enjoy.

Mr. A: Thank you, Mr. Geller, for your time and sharing your dreams and accomplishments. Gulfport is certainly better for your interest and your pioneer spirit.

### *And, What about Town Shores from the Owner's Point of View?*

How many times during the "growing up years" of your children have you heard yourself saying, "No vacation this

year; too many repairs, all those medical expenses, too much garden work to be done," etc.? Did you say, "Some day I'm going to find time to do what I want to do after the kids are grown up and away"? Town Shores has the answer for many people to that "some day." A group of seventeen buildings housing people from all parts of USA and some other countries too. It brings together professionals, homemakers, retirees, those still working and, above all, caring, active people wanting to be good neighbors.

Each building is named for a town in England. A number of owners secured from those towns a copy of their coat of arms and had it made into a shield or plaque to adorn the entrance to their building. For the convenience of its residents, each building is equipped with elevators and center and end stairwells for easy access or exit in case of emergency. The buildings are individually incorporated under Condominium Law and have Boards of Directors who act in behalf of the residents on matters pertaining to the general needs of the building and the entire complex. Various activities are made available through the planning by several clubs.

Although Town Shores is an active community within its own area, it is also an integral and important part of Gulfport's programs. It is interested in civic affairs, city management, its Library, churches, and always has a high percentage of voters active in local and national elections. Many volunteer in tutoring children, delivering meals on wheels, visiting residents in nursing and retirement homes, serving on boards of community organizations, and so on. Town Shores provides a way of living that answers many dreams — dreams pushed aside by the thought that our financial situation would never make such living possible. For some it is a quiet place to live in privacy within their own walls — to others a place of security surrounded by neighbors who drop in and are there when needed, either for just a chat or for some other good reason. To some it means socializing with many friends, dancing, dining, playing cards, and engaging in friendly competition in bingo, shuffleboard, and other games. We can do exercise classes, learn to paint, do ceramics, and sew. To all of us it means friendships, contact with people of many different backgrounds and experiences about which to talk. When the temperature is a cool 70-80 degrees and the beautiful sunset reflects its glorious hues over the waters of the inlets or the Bay itself, Town Shores is truly one of the



nicest places in the world to live.

Another owner who spends the summers up north, thoroughly enjoys the relaxing effects of being here during the winters. Property care is done by others. There are nice people from all over the United States and Canada to talk with. The weather is usually super. Often one meets people from other lands, too, and sometimes one can compare ethnic roots. All kinds of indoor and outdoor recreation are available, with good instructors for those who need their help. Exciting bus trips are offered to many Florida attractions, and even beyond state lines — yes, even Bay or longer water trips are nearby. “When we have company, they always rave about it all — the pools, the beach, and they are especially amazed at the groups dancing or watching Sunday afternoons on the shore. It’s easy to find great restaurants and entertainment in nearby Tampa and St. Petersburg — international flavors again if you wish. So my husband and I are happy we have our spacious condo with its views and conveniences. We wouldn’t change it for any other place we know.”

And several others asked us to say they really feel Gulfport is like the hometown they grew up in — not too big so you can get to know many people. It is free from smokestacks and the bustle of cities up north where they had to live while earning their right to enjoy retirement here. They don’t feel isolated into their age group because there are many children growing up in the area. Some who miss having their grandchildren nearby adopt special “grandchildren.” “If you go to the Library for the children’s parties, you can even feel really good inside — almost as though you were visiting your own kids. And they’re in there playing with puppets and having stage shows — great fun which you can watch and hear even if you’re in a wheelchair.”

— *Frances Purdy, Paul N. Paganuzzi,  
Frederick S. Allen, Others*

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Another area of Gulfport in which the housing differs from that in the balance of the City is the northwest area — west of 58th Street and north of Gulfport Boulevard. Planners refer to this one-mile-square area as “Section 29.” Actually there are two separate developments in the area, separated by 25 years, with quite different characteristics, both worth some discussion.

Like practically all of the other land anywhere around, Section 29 was part of the Disston purchase of 1883, and was included in the grandiose plot of Disston City filed with the County in 1884. But nothing happened in Section 29 until the early 1920's. It remained wilderness, inhabited by many species of wild animals and reptiles, and multi-billions of mosquitos, roaches, other flying, crawling, and biting insects. A hunter's paradise, but with no known permanent human habitation. H. Walter Fuller had included parts of it in his proposed Pasadena subdivision of about 1914. Plot plans were filed, and some land clearing may have been done, but the failure of Fuller's enterprises in 1917 stopped everything and threw the land into such a complicated series of receiverships, foreclosures, mortgage and tax defaults, that nothing could be done until 1924 when the legal problems were resolved and the land again became available for subdivision and lot sales.

At about that same time, "Handsome" Jack Taylor arrived in St. Petersburg with little money of his own but with great plans. Taylor was a first-class, flamboyant promoter who could talk anybody into doing anything he wanted, and he teamed up with Fuller, another man of the same type who had come out of the receiverships still owning some of the land in Section 29. The two men talked the owners (two St. Petersburg banks) of the remainder of the land in Section 29 — and of much of the next two sections west — into financing two great developments: Pasadena Estates in Section 29 and Pasadena-on-the-Gulf in the area west of Pasadena Avenue. Included in the financing were the plush Rolyat Hotel and the Pasadena Golf Course (originally known as the Bear Creek Golf Course). All of Section 29 — Pasadena Estates — was mapped out into sections, blocks, and lots — planning which, with only minor changes, still stands today.

In those portions of Pasadena Estates between 61st Street and 64th Street, and some south of 15th Avenue east of 61st Street, the land was cleared, streets and alleys cut through but not paved, and concrete sidewalks laid, some remnants of which can still be seen. Water mains were put in, supplied by wells, a pumping plant, and the "highest elevated water tank on Florida's west coast," all where the line of 62nd Street crosses Bear Creek. The City of St. Petersburg was talked into extending its City-owned gas mains into the area.

Taylor built a two-story sales office on Central Avenue at 72nd Street (that building still stands, occupied now by a

dress shop), hired numerous "Bloomer Boys" (nickname for lot salesmen at that time) and advertised and promoted the Pasadena developments all over the country. Some of that promotional material was more wishful thinking than factual, but that was useful for those days.

He built an enormously impressive brownstone entrance gate for Pasadena Estates on 64th Street, just south of 5th Avenue S. Remnants of that still exist and still look impressive!

In one respect Taylor operated quite differently from most developers of the time: he actually built some houses! The idea was to have something to show prospective lot purchasers what the area would look like some day and, of course, to have something more than empty lots for his salesmen to sell. These houses were all two-story, Spanish-style homes, and deed restrictions required that other houses in the development be of the same style. Garage apartments were permitted, but only for occupancy by members of the lot owner's family or by his servants. (Those and other deed restrictions were later abolished by legal action.)

Most blocks in this Pasadena Estates area have two or three of the Spanish-style houses, many built by Taylor, others built by the lot purchasers. All had gas heating, cooking, and water heating installed, a big thing in those days. Several contractors were active in building these homes in both of the Pasadena developments. One of interest was W. D. Berry who, with his family, lived in and operated his business from one of his own houses on 10th Avenue S. Berry was active in both Gulfport and St. Petersburg civic and political circles, and served several terms on the Gulfport City Council.

During the great Florida "bust" of 1926, Taylor's companies went bankrupt, starting another seemingly endless series of foreclosures, forced sales, and legal prohibition against selling any more lots. Besides that, many of the lot purchasers lost their property because of unpaid taxes and mortgage payments, and later by failure to pay paving assessments. During the 1930's, many of these lots were made available for sale to satisfy the unpaid taxes, usually for between \$200 and \$300. Many of the owners of those Spanish-style homes took advantage of this opportunity to add one, or both, adjoining lots to their original lot with the house on it. The result is that today most of the 1925 homes include one or both adjoining lots, mostly well landscaped and maintained.



In the mid-1940's, the legal obstacles were overcome and lot sales resumed. Several contractors purchased groups of lots and built houses "on speculation." Others built for individuals who had purchased their own lots earlier. All of these more recent homes are one-story and, because of larger lot sizes and higher lot prices, they tend to be larger than homes found in most other areas of the City. One of these contractors was Ivar C. Peterson, who came here from Avon Park where he had been in the contracting business. In the late 1940's, Mr. Peterson built on contract four of the better of the modern homes. He and his wife still occupy one of them on 10th Avenue S.

The open lots associated with most of the 1925 homes, the larger lot sizes, and the presence of Stetson Law School occupying four full blocks of the area, all contribute to giving this section of Gulfport a more open, less congested, look than is found elsewhere in the City. The people in this area include the usual Florida high percentage of retirees, a large portion of the rest being younger professional types.

Development of the eastern part of Section 29, between 58th and 61st Streets and between 7th and 15th Avenues S., came later and was performed entirely by one company — Florida Builders, pioneering in the then new concept of modular, manufactured housing to reduce housing costs.

St. Petersburg Beach resident John Hosack, Plant City resident John Haynsworth, and St. Petersburg resident Ed Tessier formed the Florida Builders' Association, Inc. in the mid-forties and shortly hired Gulfport residents Martin V. Ahl and Jack Pollard to work with them. Ahl became Senior Vice President, Tessier became Treasurer, and Pollard became Director of Purchasing. They began building small prefabricated houses on St. Petersburg Beach, but when the land in Section 29 became available for purchase in the mid-1940's, Florida Builders purchased all in the area mentioned — 24 city blocks in all, much of it from Walter P. Fuller, son of H. Walter Fuller and noted St. Petersburg historian. Most of the land was still in the wild state, and had to be cleared, streets cut through and paved, and water mains installed.

Florida Builders set up a factory at 43rd Street and 7th Avenue S. where inside and outside wall sections were assembled in jigs or fixtures, designed for minimum waste of material and for maximum interchangeability of sections when assembled at the site. Doors, windows, and as much wiring and plumbing as possible were all installed at the fac-

tory. Another pioneering concept was the use of plywood sheets in place of narrow boards. These sections, along with standardized roof trusses, were trucked to the site, assembled on previously poured concrete slabs, wiring and plumbing connected, and the whole painted. From the time a lot was cleared, a finished house ready for sale was standing on it in three weeks or less!

The modular, interchangeable design of the wall sections made possible an almost infinite variety of floor plans from a very small number of different sections. The net result was that Florida Builders' homes sold for as much as \$2,000 less than comparable homes which were custom-built.

In a period of about four years, Florida Builders erected and sold close to 450 homes in its Gulfport Section 29 development. They had their own siding at their factory where trains would deliver carloads of fir from Tampa — US Plywood lumber for studding, sheathing and all rough materials which were cut in their sawmill on that site. Hosack sold out to Haynsworth in 1952 and he sold . . . and of such are businesses made!

Another business Florida Builders pioneered in our area with little or no-down payment. Very unusual in the housing business in those days was the unconditional two-year guarantee Florida Builders gave on all their homes.

After completing the Gulfport development, Florida Builders went on to the larger Meadowlawn development on North 16th Street in St. Petersburg, and from there to still larger operations in north Florida.

— Willard B. Simonds

#### SOURCES:

1. For general information on Section 29 and the Pasadena Estates area: Some Pasadena promotional literature in the Society's possession; Walter P. Fuller's book, *St. Petersburg and Its People*; official Plat Map of Section 29; Abstract of Deed for this author's property; and personal knowledge gained through 25 years of living in the area.
2. For the Florida Builders development: Lengthy telephone conversations with Messrs. Robert J. Hosack and Martin V. Ahl.

## CHAPTER 11

LIVING ON THE EDGE  
OF THE SAND FLATS

It all started back in November, 1922, when my mother came by boat (Merchants and Miners) from New York to Jacksonville. She was with her aunts and a small boy cousin. They took the train to St. Petersburg. Her uncle told his sisters it was very beautiful around Williams Park. Dad came with his parents in 1923 from Massachusetts in a new Model T Ford. It must have been quite a camping trip, what with dirt roads and all! They stayed in a tent city across from Lake Maggiore in south St. Petersburg.

Really wanting to have their own home, they purchased land at 28th Avenue and 57th Street S. and built a small house and garage right away. Pioneering there meant driving over dirt streets, cutting down about twelve pine trees, and killing dozens of snakes. As three children were born, more rooms were added by Dad, the carpenter, but it was slow. Mother was more than a housewife — cook, laundress, child-carer, teacher — she held a big position in bringing up her family.

Life was quite simple in those days. Grandpa Huckins grew bananas, potatoes, and grapefruit. For Easter we had six colored baby chicks which later meant eggs for us. Dad got hold of some Muscovy ducks once, and we saw one fly, but apparently he forgot how to pull up his wings and he fell with a somersault right on our clothesline! We had a kerosene cook stove. In winter Dad put up a wood stove and we gathered pine cones to burn in it. For hot water for baths and laundry he made a fire and put a galvanized tub over it. Water had to be carried to the tub and then into the house or wash-house for the washing machine and two rinse water tubs.

It was great fun to see Nathan White's grandfather on 28th Avenue have a black man plow the earth and later grow Statices flowers (*Lemonium* species).

Weekends were exciting and busy! Mother baked, us kids worked in the yard, cleaned the car, took big baths, grocery shopped, and went down Central Avenue to roam around the Five and Dime store and select five cents' worth of candy. We couldn't stay too long because meat was in the car. Sunday we went to church and Mother had a nice dinner with Webb's ice cream. Dishes got done up fast and we went to the Park Theatre. Some Sunday evenings Mother would make fudge or



shared a Milky Way (Milky Way, Snickers and Three Musketeers in one bar). We would read the papers or listen to the radio — Jack Benny, Fred Allen, and musical programs.

From the Sunday meat we made Monday sandwiches for we always carried our bag lunch to school. Mother and Dad took us up north to visit relatives in 1929, 1932, and 1937 — camping of course on the way. Dad got hold of a homemade trailer in 1940 so then we had another trip.

For Thanksgiving Dad would get a turkey at Cooper's on Tangerine Avenue and we also got pickles there. For Christmas we would go out in the woods to select a branch of a cedar tree and Dad would saw it off for our Christmas tree. We have four cedar trees in the yard that didn't make Christmas! Grandmother and Aunt sent us a piece of their fruit cake wrapped in fancy paper. For New Year's Eve, Mother and Dad would go down the street and have a little get-together with a German and Scottish ladies.

During 6th grade moving up, we went and had hot dogs and rolls at the edge of the golf course. Gwen Tuppen's father managed the course.

Outside games were softball, hide and seek, kick the can, and marbles. Inside we played Chinese checkers, Old Maid cards, and Bunko 21. Of course, we had the wonderful woods in back before the sand flats. We knew a magnolia tree and many blue and red birds and often saw rows of quail flying onto 28th Avenue. We also saw a small alligator near the big oak tree. I would lie in bed and listen to the music from the Casino and the whip-poor-will in the woods, and Arthur Ben's hunting dogs on the sand flats.

One Sunday, Dad and Grandpa visited a friend at Bay Pines Hospital and a Veteran heard on his earset that Pearl Harbor had been bombed. After they arrived home, we all knew. I guess everyone knows where they were that December 7, 1941!

— *Norma I. Huckins*

#### Huckins Family:

Frank L. Huckins, Clara A. Huckins, Norman C. Huckins, Gladys I. Etherington Huckins, Norma I. Huckins, Earl C. Huckins, Marilyn J. Huckins Taylor.

## CHAPTER 12

### MULLET FISHING

When the sun refuses to shine and clothes haven't dried in weeks, when the icy rain of a November squall hits the face like buckshot and even the blacksnake won't stick his forked tongue out of his pit — then the time is right for mullet to search out the still water protected by flying mangrove roots, for that is where mullet spawn. All nature now conspires to protect these stars of the sea by sending the worst weather of the year to pound the bays with lashing rain and churn the air with buffeting winds. This is the time when only the hardest of men stand tall in their oiled-silk slickers and pole their skiffs into the tempest to frustrate nature's plan for the mullet.

Two men, in separate skiffs, each with a lantern, a poling oar, and 400 yards of net, glide out on a moonless night in search of flashes of phosphorous. When the glowing water is found, the two skiffs start from a common point and quietly move in opposite directions, paying out net as they encircle a shoal of mullet. When the circle is complete, the two skiffs move to the center of the enclosure, creating a great commotion with oar against gunwale and knife against kettle to frighten the fish into wildly ignoring those faint blue-gray lines that let their heads through but stop them at the pectorals. In this position the strings of the net enter the gills, preventing them from closing, so that the fish is unable to separate the atoms of oxygen from the atoms of hydrogen and consequently drowns.

Once the strike is made, the circle is opened by the two skiffs moving in a reverse direction, taking in the nets as rapidly as may be before the sharks with their triple rows of razor-pointed teeth rip out square yards of net and gulp down scores of fish. As each net is taken in over the stern, horny hands extract the fish from the meshes, the nets being dropped in the stern, the fish being thrown to the center of the skiff, but eyes ever alert for an electric eel, a man-of-war, or other paralyzing creature of the sea. The horn on the hands, which results from years of pulling on wet hemp and being stuck by fins and cut by gills, offers no protection against the shock of eels or the poison of sea nettles.

When the haul is completed, the skiffs are poled to the fish house, the place where ice has been stored; there the fish are packed in crushed ice to await transportation to market, and

the men pole out to the bay again in the hope of making another haul before the season is over.

So pass the nights and many winter days of mullet fishermen.

\* \* \*

The mullet man's wife walks down to the net-spread with her husband and joshes with the other wives while their men pole from the cove to the bay. With forced laughter over un-funny jokes, the wives return through deep sand and sand-spurs to their homes. There is a reluctance to enter the now empty house which her husband and his brothers built of heartwood; its destruction by termites or post beetles is one problem she does not have to worry about. Fire is another matter.

As the evening shadows lengthen, she knows yesterday's wash-pot water is now cool enough to turn out under the clothesline to form a hard crust over the sand. The hog her man slaughtered before setting off for mullet has to be butchered, the hams and bacon sides salted for him to hang in the smokehouse, the loins prepared for the oven, the guts emptied, scraped, washed, and boiled for sausage castings, and the offal spread round the rose and jasmine bushes. The kerosene lamps must be lighted now so the children can learn some grammar, memorize the spelling of words, and do their sums while she coaches them without missing a stroke of the flat iron on yesterday's washing. Every sheet, every starched pillow case, every undergarment, every starched shirt must be ironed with such skill as will proclaim to the world that she has pride in her work, pride in her family, pride in herself. On Saturday nights there is dough to kneed and set for Sunday's light bread — in case the preacher comes. (On other days there are clabber biscuits, hot from the oven three times a day.)

There are always necessary chores to be done, necessary in more ways than one: she must not let her mind dwell on the hazards of her man's occupation — the chances of his being stung by a ray, bitten by a barracuda, even drowned like that handsome young fisherman Leander who drowned in a November storm in the Gulf of Abydos, a tragedy that was repeated five thousand years later when our neighbor, another handsome young fisherman, another Leander, was drowned in another November storm in the Gulf of Mexico. These dangers she will not consciously admit to herself, but she cannot put them completely out of her mind as long as



her man is on the water.

Must get him to burn out the privy when the mullet are gone. Tragedy strikes the mullet men too often. There was that sad funeral for the jolly young prankster who bought wood alcohol from a passing bootlegger who said it was corn liquor. How many beds and bosks are going to miss him? He was good looking. Strong, too. No more of that. Her man wouldn't drink wood alcohol, would he? Nor would he stop at New Cadiz to call on that woman they say moved in after she got too diseased to continue plying her profession in Ybor City. Kill her, if he does!

Thankful for one job that won't have to be done tonight: bathing the children. Too cold. A lick and a promise will have to do this time. Cold is not all bad: there'll be no more house flies, sandflies, mosquitos, and gnats until spring. Soon he'll be gathering oysters and cutting cabbage palms for us. If only she could take him some hot coffee brewed from freshly ground beans. Maybe bake a pie of dried apples and raisins this cold night; maybe he'll return tomorrow with a good haul; maybe enough for us to afford screens like they have in the windows of that dude fish camp. Couple of 5000-lb. hauls ought to do it. But he'll want a truck. Too hot most of the year to bake pies and cakes in a wood-burning oven. Must get him to lay in more stove wood and kindling before long. Anyway, the best desserts hang in the trees and vines in the yard — oranges, loquats, bananas, peaches, guavas, mangoes, cherries, grapes, melons.

In the morning, before the sun is up, the day's supply of vegetables will have to be brought in from the kitchen garden, washed and prepared for cooking: squash and carrots, okra and tomatoes, egg plant and potatoes, corn and beans, spinach and beets, cabbage and onions. Wonder if he could be persuaded to plant some sugar cane this spring? There will be fish to dress and fry, a chicken to catch and make into purleu (must save the down for pillows), and four vegetable dishes to fix. The children must be properly fed, though their father might not be home for a week. There's breakfast to make and lunch boxes to fill with sandwiches and fruit for the school children.

If this cold weather holds, it will be a good time to make soap. Eggs must be gathered from the chicken hut evening and morning, washed and candled. There's milk to be churned into butter. Then there's that bolt of percale from which sheets must be cut and hemmed, pillow cases run up,

and maybe some nightgowns made. And she will embroider monograms on table linens in her spare time.

— *Richard E. Bozeman*

## CHAPTER 13

### SICKNESS FOR THEM OR US

Mostly, repairs and other cures were effected at home. Mothers were handy about fixing the usual childhood hurts; men, when meeting up with snakes, knew how to cut the area for blood- and poison-letting and to tourniquet the limb above the bite to prevent spread of the poison. Men who wrestled with alligators learned early in their childhood to throw the beast against himself as he thrashed his victim from side to side in order to twist his body so he would have to let go. If that didn't work, as once reported, a nearby physician amputated the alligator-bitten arm right on the spot and then took the victim to hospital for recovery. Usually colds, flu, and gastric disorders were treated with home remedies — sometimes with herbs their Indian friends had taught them to use. During the "cold season," children wore asefedita bags on strings around their necks to keep people who might have germs away from them. That would probably exile one from everyone because of its odor!

The local hospital, The Cedars, referred to as "only a first-aid station" by some, reportedly took care of many patients with heart attacks and other medical emergencies; but people with surgical problems had to be taken to a hospital either in nearby St. Petersburg or Tampa.

The St. Petersburg Sanitarium flourished from 1906 to 1910 when the City boasted of 2,000 residents and had hotel space for 675 guests.

A small group of men and women headed by Dr. J. D. Peabody purchased a lot on Second Street near First Avenue N. for hospital purposes. Mr. A. P. Avert offered financial assistance, and a building to accommodate 15 beds was erected, named, and incorporated. Donations of about \$2,000 were bolstered by another \$1,000 from Mr. E. H. Tomlinson to equip an operating room. Drs. Peabody, Thomas P. Welch, F. W. Wilcox, J. D. Taylor, J. A. Childs, and H. A. Murphy formed the medical staff, and Mr. Avery was Treasurer and Business Manager.

It served well but at a financial loss, and in 1909, a group of public-spirited citizens led by J. W. Harris started a movement to establish a so-called public hospital. A half block at 7th Street and 6th Avenue S. was purchased, and a year later the other half block was procured.

The hospital was opened in August, 1910, and was known as the Good Samaritan. The first part of it was later moved to 4th Avenue and 12th Street S. to be used for black people; it served them well until the Mercy Hospital was opened in 1923. Quickly the hospital was outgrown by its City, and with 350 admissions a year obviously needed to be enlarged.

The Women's Auxiliary started a campaign for support, and in three years the Augusta Memorial was opened with 22 beds just west of the present north wing. The Augusta was named for Mr. Tomlinson's mother.

The City issued a bond for \$10,000 of which \$8,000 went toward the building and the balance for retiring the land indebtedness. Dr. Frank Wilcox was the first Chief of Staff and retained that position until his death in 1918. Each doctor in the City served on staff. Later the name was changed to City Hospital, and again larger facilities were demanded.

This time the bond issue was for \$145,000, but that amount was cut to \$75,000 because of local opposition. Another addition opened in 1923 with 60 more beds and the name was changed to Mound Park Hospital because of the Indian shell mounds discovered on the property. Six of those mounds were torn down and the shells used later for paving City streets.

In 1937, another addition was completed making capacity of 130 beds (now the "B" Building and the only part of the original structure in use). Another 251 beds were added in 1952, and the hospital was declared one of the finest in the Southeast.

Another floor was added on the four-story addition, making a total of 416 beds in "B" and "C" buildings. Seven years later, the 6th and 7th floors were added. Then "A" Building was torn down and the new "A" was built, opened in 1960 with two floors available and two others shelled in.

Roser Hall, formerly a residence for nurses, was torn down and converted into space for 77 beds, 3rd and 4th floors of "A" were completed for another 78 beds, making the new total 725. With the population moving away from the central City, suburban hospital development eased the burden on Mound Park.



Not done yet! By 1968 it was agreed the hospital should be leased to a corporation. Many internal changes occurred, and Bayfront Medical Center became its new name.

Pinellas now became one of two counties in the state which had neither a city nor a county hospital. Our Bayfront Medical Center cared for the indigent, receiving far too little reimbursement for services and consequently lost ground financially. But by the mid-1970's, Bayfront again regained its leadership qualities. It is fully equipped with the most modern appliances, and across the street are found the Professional Building, All Children's Hospital, Suncoast Medical Building, Oncology Center for the County, and vast parking spaces.

St. Anthony's Hospital started out as Faith Hospital in 1923. Nine Catholic sisters came here in November 1931 from St. Francis Hospital in Miami Beach with \$50 spending money between them to begin a mission here. St. Petersburg had scarcely seen their like! The City was emerging from its pioneer stage, with incorporation and platting of streets happening only in 1888, which also marked the first saying of Roman Catholic Mass in Pinellas County.

The Florida "Boom" in real estate had collapsed, leaving over 40,000 people sunk in the depths of the Depression. Banks were shuttered and people were without work. Even though hospital facilities were considered adequate, many had not yet learned the habit of going to a hospital for serious illness or injury — and surely not for birthing! Nathan White says he was told (for once he can't remember!) that Dr. L. B. White was a popular obstetrician, with offices on Central Avenue, and he charged \$7.50 to deliver his mother — after several hours of watchful waiting! Few were able to pay even if they had wanted to. Undaunted, the sisters set up shop in the cottage-sized former Faith Hospital, on the corner of 11th Street and 7th Avenue N., and they renamed it St. Anthony's. It became the first Catholic hospital on the West Coast of Florida, purchased from Dr. Leroy Wylie, its founder, for \$40,000. The good sisters had to perform many menial tasks as well as their professional duties to overcome the skepticism of many. They went into debt to renovate, but five years later were ready to expand!

In 1920, newspaper releases indicated high regard for Dr. Wylie who, with a rich professional background in New York at Bellevue and New York hospitals, also in the Army, forged ahead with the dream of a well-equipped hospital not only

for surgery but for all diseases prevalent in this area. One of the methods the stalwart sisters used to win over the doctors was to feed them with invitations to dinner. Seeing the other skills of these young women demonstrated in their group living, the doctors began to share their confidence that there could be a fine private hospital. Somehow the money was raised in the amount of \$125,000 for the first improvements.

Some innovations introduced included five x-ray machines, ultra-violet and diathermy equipment, and a considerable supply of radium. Newspapers in 1933 declared this to be one of three leading hospitals in the South. Nursing was seen as not a mechanical art but a service impregnated with the soft sympathy on which the sick and infirm need to depend. Many staff members went into their country's service in World War II; soldiers quartered at the Vinoy Hotel waiting to go overseas came to give blood, and nurses participated in KC parties for the troops while maintaining their almost overwhelming hospital duties.

By 1948 the 1937 facility was too small, so ground was broken for an \$800,000 five-story addition; they bought the old Mayflower Apartment building across the street, and by its 25th anniversary, St. Anthony's Hospital had a 275-bed capacity and staff of 129 physicians.

St. Joseph's Pavilion was dedicated in 1958, adding another 57 beds. Ground was broken in 1965 for an \$8-million addition and physical growth and quality of patient care and equipment for it, continuously have kept this hospital operating with the high standards with which it was begun. The staff and its City anticipate another 50 years of service to many, from all over our country as well as from St. Petersburg, Gulfport, and other surrounding cities. Many residents of Gulfport work there, recover there, were born there; certainly many at this time are being born there! If you talk with us, you will discover many do volunteer work there regularly and reap deep satisfactions from complementing the professionals in their services.

Then, too, residents of Gulfport have been and/or are patients at Bay Pines Veterans' Hospital, and many have worked or do work there. Like the previously described hospitals, this facility started out small and is now huge. It opened as a Home for Retired Veterans in 1931 and in two years, with the first building nearing completion, the Regional Office was moved there from Jacksonville. From that small beginning has grown the tremendous complex of

dozens of buildings, 340 medical beds, 30 rehabilitation, 150 surgical, 150 psychiatric, 200 domiciliary, and 240 nursing home beds. This V.A. center has approximately 2,100 full-time employees with an annual payroll of over \$46-million and a total expenditure of over \$84-million for health care benefits. As one of the 172 medical centers of the Department of Medicine and Surgery of the Veterans' Administration, it will continue to provide what it has for over 50 years — "dedicated service to the Veteran, a positive influence in the field of health care, and a meaningful contribution to the life of this community."

— *Frances Purdy*

\*Please see file on Hospitals in our Museum and our story about Cedars in this book.

### *WHAT HAPPENED WHEN THEIR TEETH ACHED?*

Several people told us about the "Beachcomber Dentist," Dr. J. M. Baggett, who lived in Dunedin in the 1880's and earned his nickname by making house calls by sailboat. He sailed up and down the central Gulf coasts, stopping at farm houses as far south as Sarasota. With roads as they were, he made much better time on the water, and word of his approach was quickly spread from one neighbor to another. He usually spent the night with a family, taking care of extractions for one dollar each, and for two dollars he made a gold foil filling. If bits of the latter fell on the floor, he quickly collected them for the future; for example, he made his wife's wedding ring from such gold scraps. Years later, that wedding band was cut in half for the wives of his two grandsons!

Not only was Dr. Baggett popular as a dentist, he was also a newspaper man. He was editor of the *West Hillsborough Times* in 1884, while Dr. J. L. Edgar, a former St. Louis physician, managed the paper and M. Joel McMullen took charge of the mechanical department in the rear of Dr. Edgar's drugstore. That paper lasted only four months and they sold out and the paper was moved to Clearwater. In 1892 it was sold again for \$1200 and the press moved to St. Petersburg for the *St. Petersburg Times*.

The dentist's appointment book shows that he was paid a total of \$5.50 for services to three patients in a "Stop At



Bluff." Was it our Barnett's Bluff, or Belleair? It is also interesting to note that Dr. Baggett held the first certificate of dentistry from the Florida State Board of Dental Examiners in 1887.

Dr. Baggett's grandson and great-grandsons sail the same waters he did a hundred years later, finding adventure as did our "Beachcomber" Dentist.

— *Frances Purdy*

## CHAPTER 14

### SOME COMMENTS ABOUT CEMETERIES

One day, Cecil Slaughter remembered that James Barnett, first white settler's child born here, died July 28, 1950, and that he is buried in Glen Oaks Cemetery with his parents, James and Rebecca, who died in 1880 and 1907 respectively. That stimulated interest in the location, though it is now outside our City limits. It is located at 2010 Auburn Street S. which emerges from 22nd Avenue S. on the north side. Once it was a property of two and a half acres donated by Henry L. Slaughter, and part of it has been used as a burial ground, the rest for the Glen Oaks Community Church which more recently was named St. Jude's United Holiness Church. A letter from Frank Kimball (referred to later in this article) states that "Tim [Kimball] arranged for a home belonging to a lady from Washington, D.C. to be moved to the corner of the Glen Oaks Cemetery to be used as a Chapel. . . . 2012 Auburn St." When that building was outgrown, Tim raised most of the money for the new church in 1909 — behind the original chapel.

These sites were investigated by Helen Ross, Carl Norberg, Lum and Mary Atkinson, and their "find" acclaimed in local newspapers of February 4, 1985. A follow-up was the second letter from Frank H. Kimball of Fairfield Glade, Tennessee. Quoting in part from that letter, dated March 21, 1985, we read "believe graves found are close to the left of the middle of the church. If your members would go about 200 yards to the left of the middle of the church, they will find the earliest grave — of Emma Kimball. She arrived on the Point September 1874, and died the following month." He reports from their family history and other sources that "an interesting group of pioneers of Gulfport were Joseph and Beneventure Puig, Joseph Torres, and

Timothy Kimball who came from New Orleans in 1874-78."

Joseph Puig was married to one of the Kimball sisters. Timothy lived to a ripe old age in his home on Maximo Road and shortly before death gave John Blocker many Bethell books telling the Pinellas story. To the St. Petersburg Historical Society he gave the masthead of *The Sea Breeze* (referred to in our "Printed Words"). In 1874, Joseph Puig, excited by the Disston activities, bought 120 acres and platted it into a subdivision named New Cadiz. In 1882, he started a grocery store and post office, but it all folded when the railroad stopped in St. Petersburg. Timothy lived with the Puigs until 1878 when he bought 80 acres at 37th Street and 24th Avenue S., and Torres bought 200 acres at Disston Avenue and Boca Ciega Bay, platting it as the Torres Subdivision December 11, 1882 — but it too soon faded. Frank Kimball lists the following graves: Emma Kimball, 2-13-27—10-14-74; Emily Knight Kimball, 3-4-18—4-5-74; Joseph Puig, 4-22-30—3-10-97; Alice Puig, 1-14-42—6-2-30; Martin Campus, 11-11-5?—8-7-21; Timothy Kimball, 12-6-56—6-12-33; and he states that Richard Strada, who came on the ship with Emily 9-74, is buried next to her.

The cemetery book of St. Bartholomew's Episcopal Church was reviewed, partially read, taped and typed (available in Museum). Although many addresses were listed as Gulfport, most are not now within our limits. This cemetery is in disrepair, located on Lakeview Avenue between 18th and 19th Streets S. Mrs. E. E. Billedian is listed as owner of lots seven and nine and a notation indicated Baby Wintersgill was interred in 1947 in No. 7, but there are no signs of a grave. Page 12 states No. 1 is an unmarked grave, possibly that of Miranda who died in 1906, since No. 2 is marked for Josephine M. B. Miranda who died 1903. In that section there are references to members of the Chase family, of the Grays and Roberts. No doubt some of them were our early settlers. (Allen Hall, Cemetery Chairman, 867-7015 or 864-2268.)

Anxious to learn more about this topic, calls were made on local funeral directors, but they had no early records. Bob Easter was most helpful in suggesting a call to Woodward Elliott, Jackson Vault Co. (326-7694) and he offered to investigate specific requests from the Jackson files. It is of interest that Bill, a nephew of Norma and Marilyn (Huckins) Taylor works with him.

Further curiosity led to Greenwood Cemetery, 9th Street

and 14th Avenue S. in St. Petersburg. A call to Woodlawn Memorial Park meant that Cora Rice, for Clay Wilson, owner, told me it had formerly been known as Florida Cemetery when Mr. Billings opened it in 1935. She said the Palms Memorial, Inc. (822-4011) has records, and there, Peggy Dyer said Frank Ryll (867-5950) takes care of records and, indeed, of the cemetery now. Conversation with Mr. Ryll, May 20, 1985, was most interesting and we agreed we could share information he wants for what we need! He thought he had retired about seven years ago, but J. B. Starkey changed his mind when he asked him to take care of this cemetery where his parents are buried. "J.B." said the job would be simple — "just write a check twice a month" — but that isn't how it has come to be! He supervises total care of the place and, though no lots are available for sale, descendants of many old families of the area are being buried there. He said Mr. William Bussey was the first funeral director in town, in 1895. S. D. Harris, office at 6th and Central, bought him out in 1909. (His grandsons, Jack and Sam, are attorneys.) The Old American State Bank, holder of his finances, failed when other banks did, and things were rough until Florida National got them straightened out. P. V. Cunningham, hardware merchant, had the most fabulous place of that kind — where Union Trust parking space is now. He was interested in cleaning up Greenwood, and did; and he established a Trust Fund to maintain the cemetery.

J. M. Endicott and Mrs. Masterson built The Palms Memorial and, in 1933, Maynard Duruea bought it, and five years later Frank Ryll, his nephew, joined him. Now all their business is handled by C. James Mathews, owned by a Cleveland, Ohio, company.

Woodlawn Cemetery is from 3rd to 5th Avenues S., between 16th and 17th Alley. Evergreen is under Interstate 75, 5th Avenue S., east of 16th; and had to be cleared of 350 graves to make way for road construction. He and Monroe McRae moved many graves to Lincoln, which actually is the only cemetery located in Gulfport, south of the railroad tracks on 58th Street S.

Mr. Ryll said that Royal Palm Cemetery was opened about 1925 and Woodlawn Memory Garden in 1921. He is very pleased with the way Easter and Hendley Suncoast Funeral Homes are servicing our population. (Phone numbers are used with permission and indicated for the use of readers interested in specific requests.)

— *Frances Purdy*



## CHAPTER 15

SOME FUN AND OTHER THINGS  
PEOPLE TOLD US ABOUT

*Helen Ross* collected a lot of what we would call amusing trifles now, but then these things really happened! *Marjorie Dalton Johnson* told Helen about a little boy who had no bathing suit, so he put large safety pins in his older brother's suit and went swimming every day wearing it. Two artists at the beach offered to pay him if his parents agreed to let them paint his picture. Embarrassed but thrilled, his mother burned the old suit and rushed out to buy him a nice new one. The artists were totally devastated because they were doing a cover picture for *The Atlantic Monthly* and wanted character, not just another little boy dressed in a proper bathing suit! Marjorie also told us about the young Oriental man dressed in native silks who was the official greeter at the fabulous Rolyat Hotel. He was just loved by the guests. His little dog was, too, for he dressed the dog in dark glasses with hat and pipe. The dog would perform tricks while they were having their pictures taken. She has one such picture. *Sara Ann Paterson* said many prominent celebrities stayed at the Rolyat Hotel — Mrs. Clark of the Clark candy bar company, Babe Ruth, Lou Gehrig (who bought property in Pasadena Estates, she thought), and others known to be paying with gold in business deals. Women were sometimes alone at the hotel and selected young men known to have good manners, presentable suits *and* dancing abilities to accompany them to the dances and they enjoyed great refreshments. One such lucky young man was Richard E. Bozeman.

When a fireworks store on Beach Blvd. blew up, there was an unscheduled celebration at the beach, said *Nathan L. White, Sr.*, who also said it was good advice not to stick your hand into a gopher hole lest you get attached to a snake! Speaking of surprises, *Walter Brooks* told about how a chronic complainer was walking down the street when the Fire Department went by, and someone (accidentally?) turned the water on. He had a fast bath and they heard less fussing from him after that!

In Pasadena Estates there were brick streets but no houses and the only way to get the weeds cleaned out from between the bricks was to burn them. Then the animals came dashing out of the woods because of the smoke and many had lots of activity for a while! The Daniel's Castle was built by a

"soldier of fortune" on 49th Street, but the *Thomes* didn't know much about it, nor have we found any who do. Do YOU? The song "Coming In On A Wing And A Prayer" was written about a Gulfport boy, John Kronkite, so *Catherine Davis* said, and she also recalled that the trees in Chase Park were planted in memory of the boys killed in the war.

*Nat Futch* said lots of shirts and underwear were made from bleached flour sacks and *Sallie Mann* and *Evelyn Sibole* said their "unmentionables" were two legs with elastic on the bottoms and one elastic on top to hold the legs up — *no middle!* *Joe Roberts* headed home from fishing one day early due to motor trouble. He spotted a cache of bootleg liquor — six bottles in a burlap sack and there were ten sacks. He looked around — all clear — touched them with his pole; the clink was right! He took the ten bags, hid one for future use, and shared the other nine with his friends who landed in jail to sleep it off! They later were surprised to hear that someone was watching but said nothing. *Conrad Boette* told about how he and others caught bullfrogs at 28th Avenue and 50th Street and sold them to restaurants. *Nathan* said that sea turtles would get beached and the town would turn out to watch the butchering of them — five kinds of meat, some of which were sweet and tender.

A policeman from St. Petersburg was known as "Cowboy Murphy" and a lady from Gulfport who could ride and herd cattle as well as any man, was chasing cows back and forth over the boundary lines after the fence law went into effect. The policeman was paid one dollar for each cow he caught, but she would have none of it — that was one of *Cecil Slauter's* yarns, and he has many more!

*Sydney Brooks* remembers a lot about how things were when she and her son, *Walter*, talked with *Helen* in July, 1983. Though lots of water has always bounded this area, getting clean water into the homes in the early days was a problem. Mrs. Brooks saved the drippings from their ice box to have water fit to wash her baby's diapers. Clothes were always stained by the "ground water" as they are today, but today we have plenty of clean water. (How long shall we say that if we don't conserve?) They recalled the usual diet of fish and wild game, dried beans, cornbread, and cole slaw. They would gather the plentiful scallops, sell a quart for a quarter, and buy a pound of steak with the proceeds. Oleum was always on hand to treat burns, infections or cuts; and many wore *asefetida* bags tied around their necks in winter

to ward off colds. (That odor would no doubt keep infectious people and others at a distance!) They remembered when a fat woman attempted to make the Guinness Book of Records by staying in the water under the pier for several days in the early thirties. People gave her food and fluids, but she gained only local recognition and many insect bites.

Mrs. Brooks used to get up at four in the morning to bake cupcakes which she sold for a dollar a dozen. Walter's college tuition was paid partially with that money. When she hung clothes out in her yard to dry, the mosquitoes were dreadful — her legs would be heavily spotted with blood from having swatted them. The man across the street from her had riding horses and they always hid the hugest flies in the County! Children played in the hot sun rather than run the risk found in the shady haunts of the "biters" and everyone retreated indoors when the sun went down because of the pesky insects. In earlier days when windows were unpaned, cow dung was burned so the smudge would repel the pests. They said many houses around Gulfport are built of pine and cypress which termites cannot digest. They remembered the chanting of black men who would sing as they worked at anything that had a rhythm to it such as the laying of bricks for roads. Children obeyed the nine o'clock curfew, or Holland would catch them, as he did in the watermelon patch more than once! Several told the story about how Holland, also the Fire Chief, rang the bell at headquarters to call the firemen but forgot to write down the location of the fire! The men came, and as they wondered where to go, Holland came back yelling at them to come with him. It was *his* own house that was burning!

*Nathan L. White, Sr.* said no one ever locked doors in those days — they'd go away on vacation for two weeks and leave bikes on porches and doors wide open (who knew where the keys were anyhow after years of leaving doors unlocked?). Neighbors would go door to door hunting any person missing from home. Once they had to find a wife whose body was eventually found between 26th and 27th Avenues, on 58th Street, and the murderer was shortly apprehended — a friend of the family, no less!

An old newspaper carries this story by Mrs. Mary A. Roberts, 19 Boulevard, Struthers, Ohio, and it's called "Gulfport's Friendly Old Streetcar." The article states, "Probably the friendliest streetcar in the world connects St. Petersburg with Gulfport, or Veteran City as it was then called during



the early days of the turn of the century when I moved there as a girl. The conductor and motorman . . . were most accommodating, realizing their line was the only connection with the big city. If one were late in getting ready for the trip, a monumental one in those days, he would send ahead someone to tell the line's operators that he was on his way and they'd just wait as long as they had to. I have vivid memories of waiting with other passengers for someone who had to finish dressing or other chore before catching the car into town. We never seemed to mind — it was part of our relaxed way of life. . . . The line was established at the insistence of Alonzo A. Hoyt, a pioneer who gave up much of his land for the right-of-way. He used to smile at me and say he never received as much as a free ride. He did receive the thanks of Gulfport residents and the winter visitors who delighted in riding the line through. We realized how important the street-car was when on occasions storms and high waters washed out the tracks and we were forced to venture to St. Petersburg on our own. I remember one time when my parents had urgent business in town and walked all the way. They stayed in St. Pete until the service was resumed. The days it plied on one track . . . seem like yesterday. . . . The tracks looked like railroad ties that are laid above the ground and then the tracks on top of it. Where the passengers boarded looked like two wooden pallets laid on the ground, one on each side of the track. . . .

"I remember the first alligator farm. My father was one who helped catch alligators. When I was there in 1927, they took me to see Bob who was quite old at that time and had knocked father flat on his face with his heavy tail — he was about sixteen feet long. My father did a lot of hunting — alligators, bobcats, armadillo, racoons. . . . One of the biggest problems was snakes . . . all over the place . . . came into buildings, in fact, my mother said she left her bag around and when she came back there was a snake sitting in it . . . they were like worms up north . . . all over!"

When talking with Nathan another time, he told about how his grandfather, Nathan B. McKinney, built the house at 3008 54th Street S. for a wedding present for his mother, Ethel C. White, who had just married Leander A. White. It cost maybe \$2500 to build and still stands in good condition, he thinks. It was affectionately called the "White House" — where all the children would gather because his mother said she wanted it that way for then she knew where

her kids were. That house was one of three in the area between 29th Avenue and 31st Avenue. Nathan's grandfather lived at 2723 56th Street and had a banana grove and raised gladioli and statas, the latter he shipped all over the country in pasteboard boxes. Nathan recalls how much pleasure was shared when his Grandpa sat out front by the hour talking with people who came by to buy his lady finger bananas or some flowers — or just to talk!

In June, 1983, *Jerome Girard* remembered about the ice box his father made. They used to dig a hole in the ground and put blocks of ice in, then place food around it as best they could. He invented an ice box of wood and in between layers of wood put sawdust. The lid had a window weight on it so that when one pulled the weight down, the lid was lifted. In August, 1982, *Virginia Easter Welch* told about passing out many copies of Kim's *Guide to Florida* when she went north, trying to interest people she knew in moving here. Now she thinks our City is large enough and encourages people to just visit. Virginia ran a beauty shop many years in her own building until her first child was born. She said everybody was glad that when they built Town Shores, it killed millions of mosquitoes! She said Mrs. Lucky had the girls clean out the pine needles stored in what she later made into the first library. They came after school, and when finished she gave them lemonade and cookies on the porch. Her Granddaddy was a builder of many houses here. He came from St. Augustine and before that from Spain, and here he met and married Miss Slaughter. They ran the first grocery store, hauled supplies from Tampa, and when they couldn't get supplies, they'd plant sweet potatoes and sell the leaves for salad greens. With plenty of fish and small animals, they ate well. Her cousins gladly told how they gathered small shells and made pictures with them. They showed me a rice shell purse which they promised to give the Museum one day. They all three loved their teacher, Mrs. Mary Lou Gray, who played with them, taught them, and was pretty. Their Dad was Superintendent of the gang that built the railroad from St. Petersburg, and he was the first conductor of the trolley. Sallie Mann was born the first day the trolley ran. They told about Granny Wells who lived here quite a while. She came from Pasco County and hauled wood with her horse and buggy. She smoked corncob pipes and made and drank her own whiskey which she made in a tea kettle, holding a plate over the steam to distill the good stuff. She looked just like

Mama Yokum.

We have a newspaper clipping dated 8/10/58 showing a Thorne picture of "Lost Romance of the Rice Shells" and a write-up by his wife stating that collecting these tiny shells was a favorite pastime of northern visitors. Strung together, they make a lovely necklace and, to visitors, they epitomized the romance of sunny Florida. Her husband for many years was the official spring training photographer for the Braves and Yankees baseball teams and they loved their life here in the 1920's. On Monday nights everyone in the community would gather at the Casino for supper and dancing; in the summer he had a studio in New Jersey where the pace was much faster. She wrote, too, that the little rice shells just seemed to disappear and she therefore cherished her necklace even more.

"Uncle Robert Cushing" lived at 2301 57th Street S. and had chickens for sale. He invented "battery coops" and built one on top of another and off the ground with troughs running to each cage with food and water. The eggs rolled down the troughs!

With deep affection Mary tried to reconstruct the tape which had excessive background noise making it difficult to hear enough to type her words — the words of *Harriet Benn White*. She was born in England in 1906 and came to Gulfport in 1921 with her Uncle Arthur Hudson. Later, her mother, sister and brother arrived. Arthur Hudson was a contractor, quite an entrepreneur back then. He had a large tent erected at the foot of 54th Street and Shore Blvd. where the old pier used to be and there he put in a store. Harriet worked there and sold soft drinks, crackers, sandwiches, and coffee to people getting off the boats from Pass-A-Grille. She used to gather rice shells, string them, and sell the necklaces to the tourists. Later, Arthur opened another shop at Delette and Beach Blvd. in the building which presently is known as Rehearsal Hall, housing the Community Players' equipment. On the large porch they set up tables and chairs and served sandwiches, coffee, and ice cream. Next door to their shop No. 2 was an empty lot and Arthur sent to Boston for a carnival ride. It was composed of six boat swings that swung around in a circle when given a push to start them. The ride and the little shop were very popular with the young people and provided lots of fun for many.

The following is the Obit. for Harriet Benn White: "White, Harriet Benn, 78, of 1102 55th Street S., Gulfport, died



Thursday (April 11, 1985). Born in Bradford, Yorkshire, England, she came here in 1919 from Massachusetts and was a member of Disston Avenue Church of Christ and Gulfport Historical Society. Survivors include three sons, Robert and Ollie, both of Gulfport, and Clyde, Lilburn, Ga.; two daughters, Harriet Ann Lanton, Fort White, and Bonnie Hartman, Tampa; four brothers, Arthur Benn, Dunnellon, Roy Thompson, Seminole, Jack Thompson, Gulfport, and George Thompson, Floral City; two sisters, Emma Pollard, Gulfport, and Dorothy Johnson, Dunnellon; 15 grandchildren and 17 great-grandchildren. Robert D. Easter Funeral Home, Gulfport."

— Mary P. Atkinson

### SOME GABBER GOODIES

(These Issues from Nathan White)

May 28, 1970 — *City of Gulfport, Florida — Everyone's Kind of Town*: and it features pictures of Council and City management, and many special people and buildings. One of the most interesting ads is for Town Shores condos priced at \$11,995! There is a nice story about Herman Geller, "foremost builder of condominiums on the West Coast of Florida" and of his building background in Miami. Mayor "Bud" Markham had just broken ground for the new Marie E. Bryan Memorial Library (\$100,000), and Meals-On-Wheels were being prepared by the Irelands in their Casino Snack Bar and delivered by volunteers directed by Mrs. Hanfield and Mrs. Hans. Fire Chief L. T. McCarthy and Assistant Chief Nathan White are pictured with their new Plectron Alerting and Monitor Receivers.

June 25, 1970 — *Cool Police*: Our Police Department got their first air-conditioned car — comfort plus additional safety since moisture on windows during heavy rainfalls would now be eliminated. Ruth's Restaurant advertised dinners from 85 cents to \$2.45, and the Kelly Brothers had a "Fish and Chips" dinner for the 4th of July fireworks, turning over \$161 to Mayor Markham — total receipts for a busy evening of food, fun, and music.

April 1, 1971 — *Gulfport Casino 1905-1971*: The picture is of the second Casino, destroyed in the hurricane of 1921. Johnny Braun and his Orchestra played for dancing — admis-

sion was a dollar a couple! Little League had opened another season at Hoyt Field. GAFY was going full tilt, sponsoring teen dances and other activities for the growing youth population of Gulfport, and Council decided to appoint a full-time Recreation Director. The Casino item is a fine abbreviated history of the three structures on that site, complete with pictures. The Friends of the Library held its first meeting, and installation of officers was announced for April 21 at the Pasadena Country Club (\$4.00). The Woman's Club was busy sponsoring scholarships for students at Boca Ciega High School, in arts and crafts, and supporting their ecology program by having tables of "Things Made from Trash" at the students' carnival. The Garden and Bird Club heard Gil Whitton, County Agent, and celebrated their birthday with a covered dish supper. An 8-ounce T-bone steak with tossed salad and French fries at Kelly's was announced for \$1.45!

May 13, 1971 — The Gulfport Festivals became incorporated and was urging residents to support the 4th of July celebration. Town Shores prices were starting at \$14,495 now! Our Winn Dixie store opened its new front addition after 16 years of service here. It employed 35 people, half of whom were local residents. The Senior Citizens Club recessed regular meetings for the summer, but would have picnics twice a month at the large cabana on the beach.

June 10, 1971 — Gulfport Festivals, Inc. going full speed ahead with plans for the 4th of July, including beauty pageant, races, parades, and food! Arnold S. White announced the fourth annual summer camp for Little League. Users of the new Library were protesting the need to walk to the front door after parking in the rear of the building. They were advised to enjoy the nicely landscaped walk and the benches provided on the front lawn by the Lions' Club. The Coterie Club held their annual banquet at Captain Zak's, St. Petersburg Beach, and the Lions' Auxiliary installed their officers at the Lions' Center.

June 17, 1971 — *Bite of the Housing Code*: with pictures of the demolition of properties long complained about and condemned. Council had been taking aggressive action to secure local voter registration — picture shows Wilda Cook talking against it — now this is taken for granted, thanks to the persistence of our former Councils and a better attitude in the Office of Elections! Gulfport Reassurance program celebrated its second successful year, with 24 volunteers and police cooperating when needed — to help our senior adults

feel more secure.

June 21, 1971 — Front picture is of Herman Geller with five beauty contestants. Tele-Prompter Cable TV continues their full-page ad and announced appointment of local manager to improve sales. The cross-walk on Gulfport Blvd. at Winn Dixie was marked and traffic speed was to be enforced at 15 miles per hour — “often 40” — what else is new, we ask? A red tide alert was imposed because of infestation in Tampa Bay, posing no threat to swimmers but people were advised not to eat shellfish. Hurricane season opened — with suitable warnings for those living in this area. The former Library was being turned into an Adult Center and residents were asked to give furniture and other gifts to make it attractive for its new use. The Recreation Department was running full speed ahead with many activities scheduled for all ages.

October, 1971 — “Maybe it wouldn’t be a bad idea to put the designers of women’s bathing suits in charge of cutting governmental budgets.” If good then, what about now??

## ABOUT RECREATION

(Taken from Council Minutes by Agnes Conron)

Feb. 7, 1922 — Permission granted to Mrs. Griffin for the Michigan Society to play checkers and dominoes in City Hall. Two years later, Council discussed the possibility of building a place for playing checkers and chess.

March 3, 1925 — Ordinance passed regulating worldly pleasures in Gulfport on Sundays, and two years later the Park Board was authorized to install horseshoe courts and two shuffleboard courts when the results of the former seemed to justify such installation.

Feb. 1, 1927 — Special election held to vote on some ordinances and the results may interest you. Sunday morning picture show — 83 voted “yes”, 72 “no” and Sunday night dances using Town Hall — 112 voted “yes” and 43 “no.”

Oct. 18, 1927 — Council decided to take \$35 from the General Fund for a Halloween Party for the school children; and by December, lots 7 and 8, Block 1 of Boca Ciega Park subdivision was designated as location for two horseshoe courts.

Feb. 7, 1928 — For safety’s sake, children under 16 were not permitted on the above-mentioned courts.

1929 — Matt Brooks was given a cash award he won racing



his motorboat, the *Miss Gulfport*.

1931 — L. D. Renny invited Council to an entertainment and dance at the Casino, but there was no Sunday dancing permitted. The next two years have entries permitting Street Department men to help Mr. Anthony with the baseball field at Hoyt Park "as long as it didn't interfere with their work." A complaint was registered by Ebin Drum against a local boxing ring, with the result that the Gulfport Athletic Club agreed to remove the fighting arena within ten days.

### MOONSHINING, GAMBLING, AND SOME CURES TOO!

Of course, the above activities entered into the daily lives of our predecessors! Several interviewees told us about how popular they were — and gambling was legal for many years. The Lowe family, for instance, made moonshine and wine and sold it for 50 cents a pint. Canadian whiskey found its way onto our beach, picked up by drivers of cars with false bottoms under the back seat. There were no law officers in the area to check such traffic, but one had to use great care when crossing the border between Canada and the United States because Customs there had a section of the road fixed with lighted mirrors which could find anything less than the most skillfully disguised bottles. Fishing boats did not carry rum in from the Islands, but Jamaican rum was brought by car from Miami regularly. Those drivers were mean men who wouldn't hesitate to use strong-arm tactics to protect their investment. The Coast Guard was vigilant but more concerned about saving fishermen caught in storms than in catching "runners." Two ladies remembered "Granny Wells" who lived about a mile out of town and came in with horse and buggy to deliver "wood." She smoked a corncob pipe and made and drank her own whiskey, popular in town too. They said she made the hooch in her tea kettle, holding a plate over the steam to distill the good stuff. She looked like Mammy Yokum!

Where did they gamble? We have learned little about specific locations, but there surely were back rooms in stores, tables set under shady trees that once decorated our streets more than they do. Perhaps chips flew in our Casino and hotels! Pass-A-Grille may have heard yells of "good luck" on holidays when their hotels had visitors from St. Petersburg

who had taken the trolley through Gulfport, a steamer across the Bay, and were on their beach to enjoy families and friends away from home for a while. The loss of the splendid McAdoo Bridge over the Bay during the 1926 hurricane was felt by all such travelers. They also said kids would swipe oranges and other fruits and vegetables, stuff them in their shirts, and then sit around a campfire in the evening talking about their expeditions as all boys do. They'd go home to bed to get up early as usual to help their fathers with the major occupation — fishing. That's how they learned!

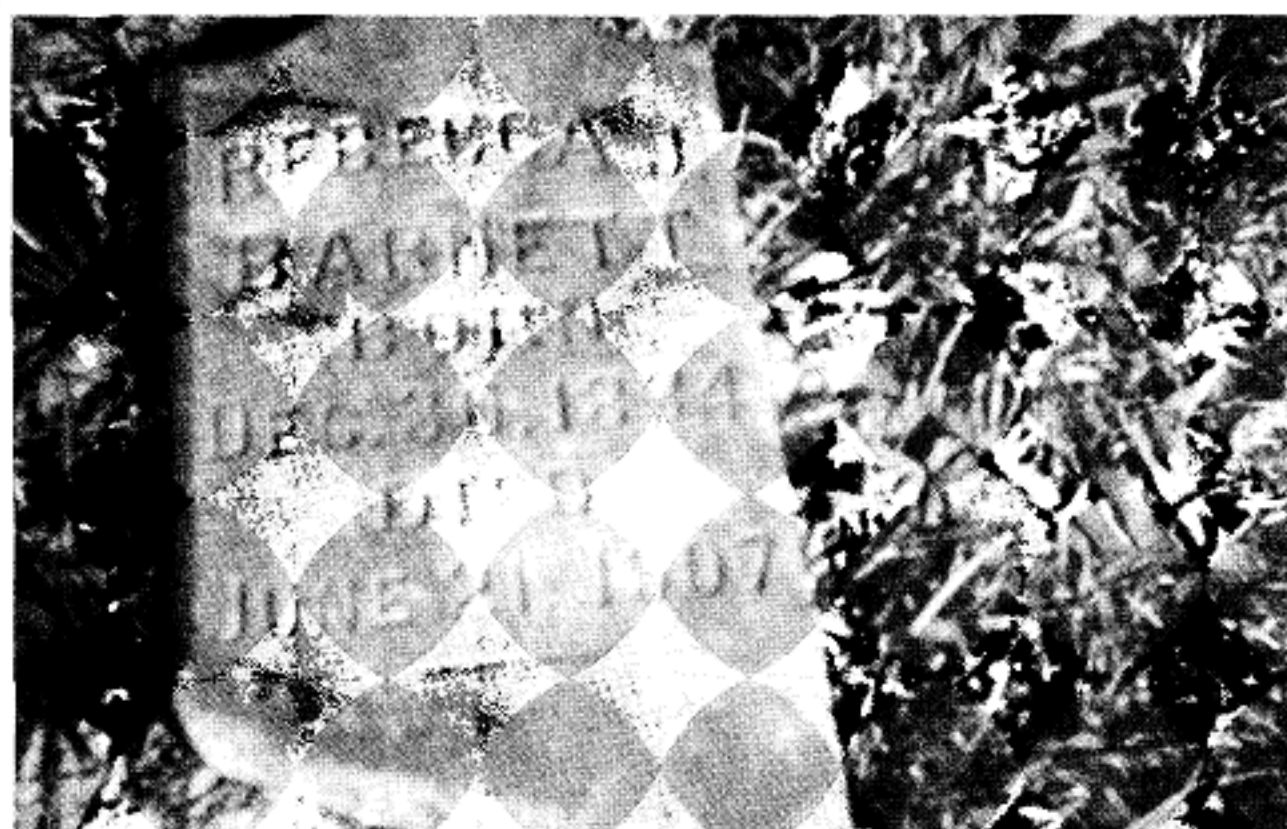
Cecil Slauter told us that turpentine was used for curing stings and minor cuts, and fishermen always carried it for emergencies. Asafetida, a fetid-smelling sap from the camphor tree, was worn in a bag around the neck to prevent colds — by isolating the wearer from those infected, no doubt! Grownups used bitters — 95% alcohol — for many problems, including blood poisoning. Sugar on flannel cloth would be set on fire in a can and an injured arm or leg could be held over it. The treatment turned the skin real brown but stopped poisoning from setting in. One recalled cutting his foot really bad while fishing and he had cobwebs put on it to stop the bleeding. His grandmother smoked it for several days with the "can technique" and it got well. Croup cure was onions — a tea with sugar steeped on the back of the wood stove several days and children drank it. Castor bean leaves were used as poultices on boils or when a fish hook broke off in the hand and got infected. Another favorite "cure" was octagon soap scraped off, mixed with sugar, and kneaded into the infected area to draw out the pus. An asthma cure was gibson weed rolled into cigarettes.

Dr. Rausch had his home just east of where Goodwill now stands — on 22nd Avenue S. — and he mostly worked at Suncoast Manor. His helper was Dr. McGibony. These gentlemen made every effort to treat people when they could get to the patient; muddy roads and streams had often to be traversed, you know. Babies were born at home in those days, with a neighbor's help or perhaps a midwife. Rarely did anyone go to hospital — the nearest one was over in St. Petersburg, on the east side of it at that! And that was another hazardous trip! (See section on hospitals.)

— *Mary P. Atkinson*



*Tombstone of James Barnett, died 1886, aged 53 years, buried Glen Oak Cemetery.*

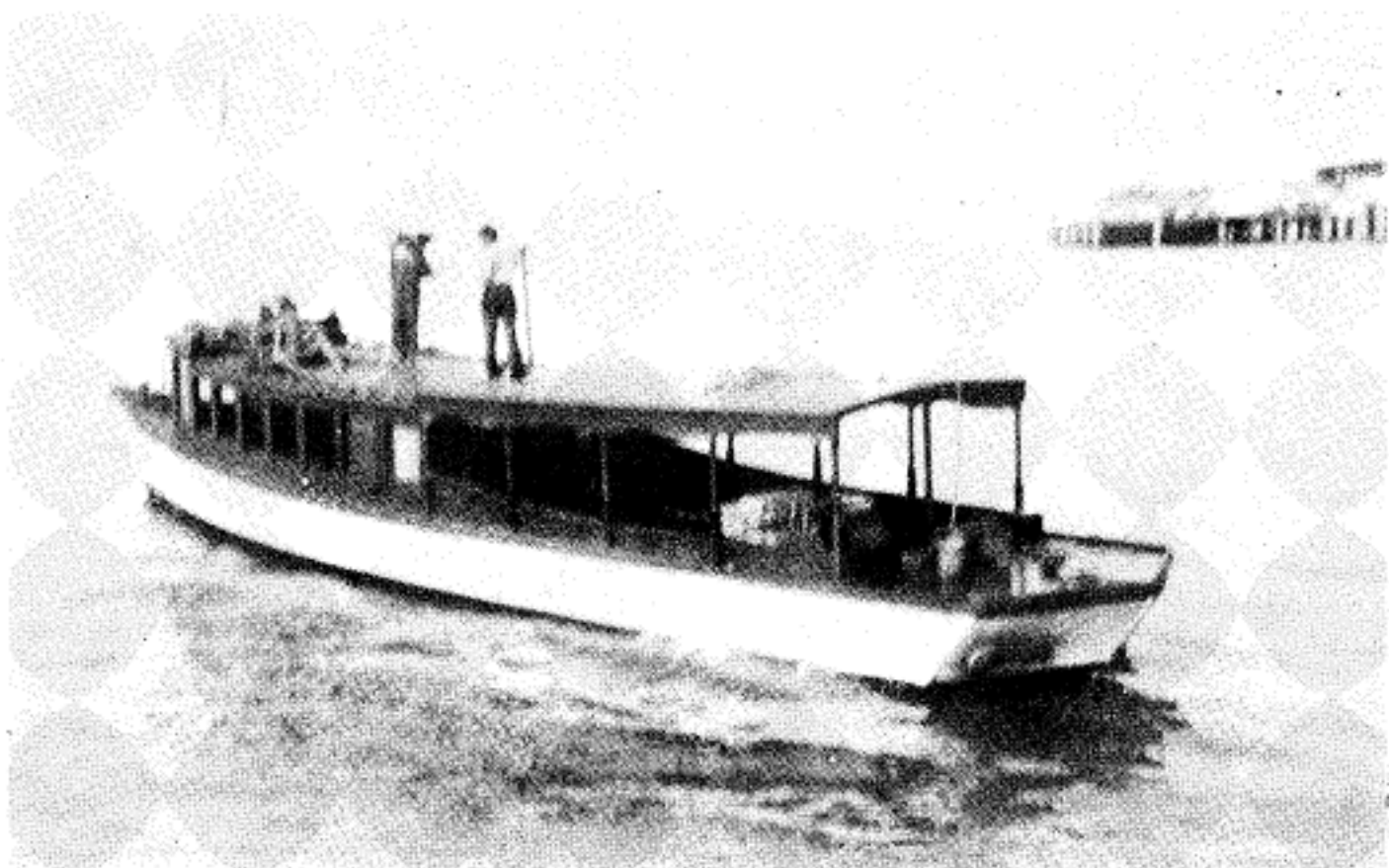


*Tombstone of Rebecca J. Barnett, born Dec. 30, 1834, died June 21, 1907, buried Glen Oak Cemetery.*

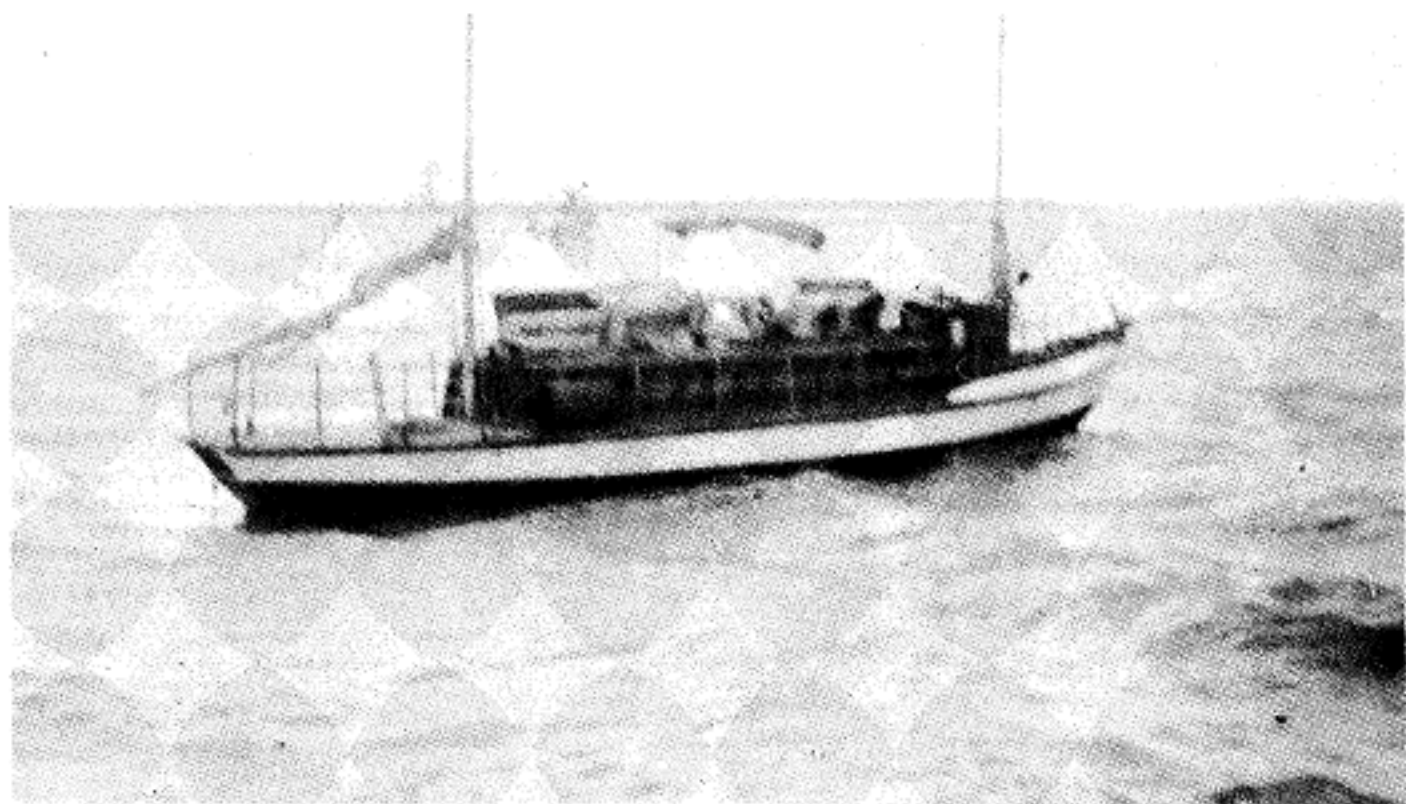


*1926 — Captain Read, party, and catch. Man at right is identified on back of photograph as a manager at Woolworths 10-cent store.*





*Captain Knowles' Satsuma.*



*Captain Read's Casinova.*



*Gulfport's Casino end-of-trolley car line.*



*Sunshine Fruit Stand and Phebe Arms, Essex & Beach Blvd.*



*Gulfport Beach*

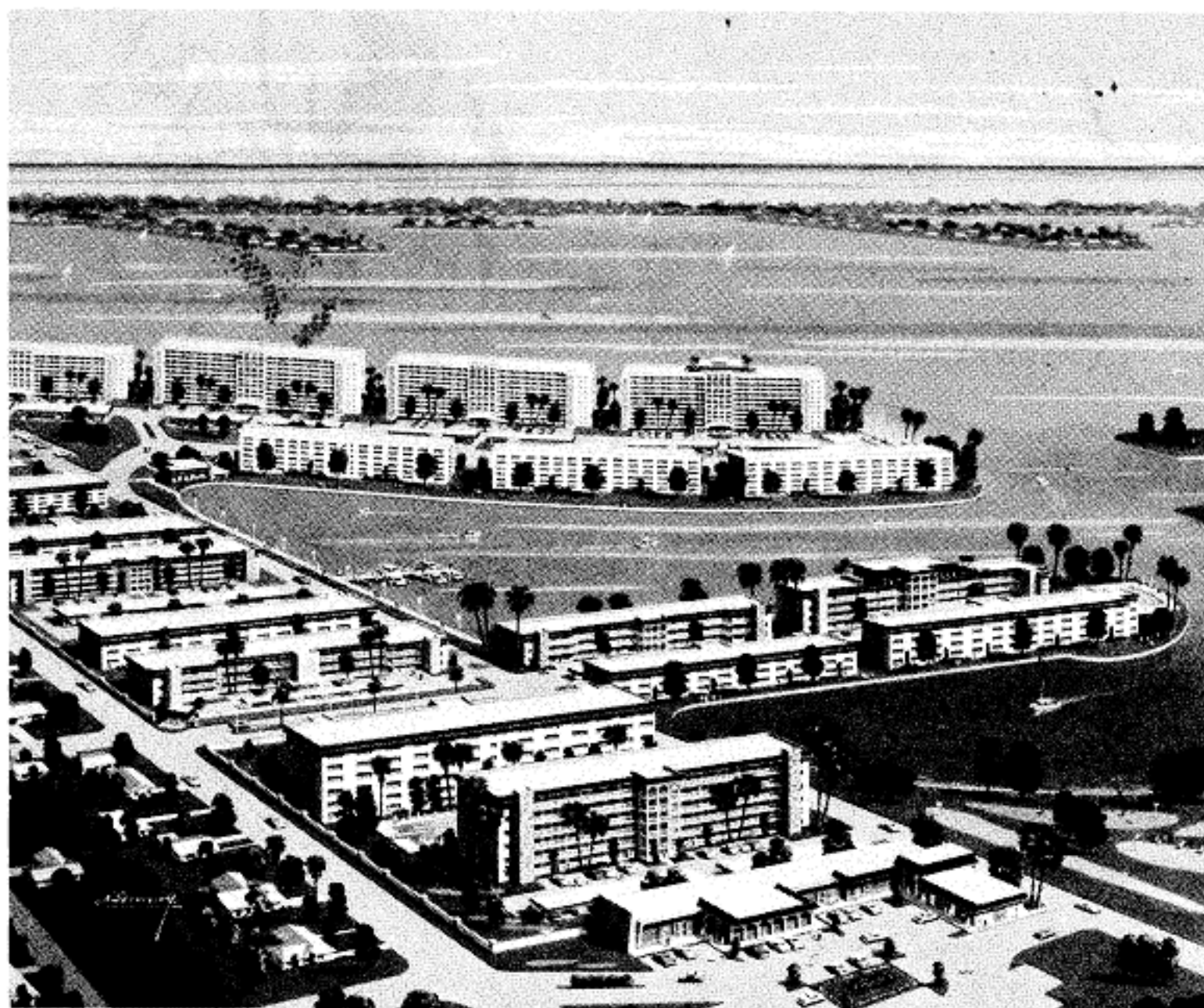


*Boca Ciega Inn, Gulfport*





*Stella Tamm, 2nd from right, front row, with American Legion Auxiliaries, 1954.*



*Town Shores of Gulfport — architect's rendering of waterfront condominium community of 13-40 apartments.*







# Some Interesting Buildings

## CHAPTER 16

### THE BAYVIEW TERRACE RESTAURANT

Mrs. George Haas (Edith Barrett) told us about buying their restaurant from Bill Nettling in 1947 for perhaps \$4,000 or so. One of the restaurant's specialties was a fish sandwich which was so popular people came from miles around to buy them. They'd sit on the beach and eat the sandwiches and enjoy the sun and breeze under one of their umbrellas at the tables their tiny space afforded. They bought fish from Aylesworth's Market nearby and Mrs. Haas smiled as she told of how the men would come for coffee each morning, bringing their dog, who also liked coffee — with sugar? Captain Williams was a frequent visitor — lots of fishermen dropped in and they made many friends.

The weather was bad sometimes, so they built a small dining room to seat 24, and when they had a crowd, they could use a long table near the outside wall. They stayed open from 9:30 till after supper, but their main trade was for lunch. Food had to be bought because there was too little room for baking, though she did bake pies sometimes. They went to Swift and Company across from Webb's in St. Petersburg for meats, and to Tampa Nuggett down on 3rd Street at about 5th Avenue, and to Swan's for desserts. Once they served Thanksgiving dinner to practically all of Gulfport!

Stores to their east included the Fish and Game Club, Caldwell's Real Estate, the Gulfport Tribune, a little restaurant, Walt's Gulfport on the Rocks, and a bar at the corner where Nellie's is now. Markham's was toward the west with Bell's Restaurant on the corner and a fruit stand around on Beach Boulevard run by Phoebe Arms. Edith said they bought their orange juice from her and recalled how the trolley conductors used to tease her about selling them canned juice! (Phoebe squeezed it herself every morning.) The old gentleman (Rubin) who took pictures on the beach was another favorite customer.

The Friday night dances at the Casino brought them many customers who came for soft drinks and snacks during intermission, while others went further along the street for something stronger. They drove a "Suburban" car bought in 1948 which they used to carry supplies.

Lots of vacant space was available in those days. Stores got started along the boulevard and a miniature golf course went to the present alley and back to the street. Hal Saalfrink had



it — he was always a sailing enthusiast and his widow is still active in Coterie Club and the Presbyterian Church. They lived in a wooden house on the corner near where the four-apartment building and on the next street west, Jack and Emma Pollard brought up their boys. Edith thinks the present Beach Bazaar was built to become a Post Office. Bart owned lots of properties (where Winn Dixie and the bank are now) and he leased the opposite corner for years to Greer for a gas station. Edith bought her house in 1964 when the Dr. Marcys, Walter Churchills, the Coxsons and Radcliffs were in. She told Joe Pestano about the availability of the "Hawaiian House" and was glad when he bought it and destroyed the bamboo interior decor since she felt it was a fire hazard. Her area — Baywood Point Drive — is surely one of the most beautiful, bordering the Bay and the Little Bayou as it does.

## CHAPTER 17

### BOCA CIEGA INN

In the beginning it was called the Hotel Dobler, built in 1922 on the corner of 31st Avenue S. and 54th Street S. It was meant to be an exclusive fishing lodge, but it never really succeeded well. It was a large frame building covered with stucco. The lower floor consisted of a large entrance hall, main lobby, sun porch, dining room, kitchen and pantries. There were 42 rental rooms upstairs. It contained an elevator shaft but no elevator was ever installed. John Dobler seemed unable to manage well or even attract enough guests. He was pistol-whipped by local residents because he let his black employees stay in the stable attic after dark. A curfew was in effect in Gulfport at that time, and no black person was allowed to stay from "sundown to sunup." After that, Dobler never seemed to regain his strength enough to complete his plans for the hotel — his spirit was gone.

Ten years later, Mr. and Mrs. Paul B. Camp bought the hotel and changed its name to Boca Ciega Inn. The cost was \$32,500 for the building and four lots! They also paid \$2,500 for furnishings for the 42 rental rooms and for the dining and kitchen equipment. The full basement was made into game rooms and a business office was added. In addition to the main building, there were four apartments and two

cottages facing 31st Avenue which were rented by the season or the month. People renting these spaces were eligible to enjoy the activities of the regular inn guests and most of them took their meals at the inn. Boca Ciega Inn was operated on the American plan, with three complete meals a day. Usually there would be 200 people for Sunday dinner, and soon 95% of the guests were booking for the coming year. Those who returned season after season said it was just like one big happy family. Mr. and Mrs. Camp worked tirelessly as hosts, striving to please and make their guests comfortable in every way. They were competent and careful managers, due perhaps in part to experiences gained from running their hotel, The Ocean House, in York Beach, Maine. That was another seasonal business (summer) for many years. The Camps were admired and loved by all they contacted, and the Inn became successful because two friendly, caring people were in charge of it.

Mr. Camp would go to market every morning, and if any of the guests wanted to get up early to accompany him, they were welcome to ride with him into St. Petersburg and return by trolley. The streetcars came down the center of Beach Boulevard after turning south from 22nd Avenue. Tracks ran between two rows of ancient oak trees and provided a shady ride to the Casino. The fare was five cents.

Mrs. Camp was in charge of the kitchen (among other things) and planned menus for each day (no two were ever alike). The meals were hearty and delicious, with plenty of fresh Florida fish, fruits, and vegetables. That food was one big reason for the continuing success — it assuredly was no place to be if on a diet! Mrs. Camp usually employed black chefs who would travel with them from Maine each year. One prepared the meats, another the breads, and baking was done each day. Eventually, one of those faithful chefs left for New Orleans where he took a position in the "Quarter." But he came back to Gulfport each year to thank Mrs. Camp for giving him such a fine start in his career. Another mainstay on their staff was a remarkable black man named "Major." He was bellman, chauffeur, waiter, houseman, and all-around majordomo. He started working for the Camps when he was 16 years old, and remained with them almost forty years — in Maine and here.

The grounds around the inn were always beautifully landscaped, with flowers, plants, and spacious lawns down to the Bay. A true artesian well on the waterfront slope was always

a busy center. It bubbled up clear and cool like a spring and people from all over Gulfport were welcome to fill their jugs and bottles with the pure water. Many called it their "fountain of youth." The attractive gazebo was a most pleasant place to sit and watch the water scene, or chat, or think, or just sit!

Entertainment was varied and lively. Daytime activities included shuffleboard matches, swimming, boating, and fishing. There were many lawn parties and picnic lunch groups on good weather days. Transportation was arranged for those wishing to attend church, the theatre, musicals or lectures in the downtown area. Thursday evening was party night when the ladies dressed in their best gowns and the men wore black ties. After dinner, bridge, bingo, or other card games were enjoyed, and Mrs. Camp always provided prizes for each table or game. An art teacher came weekly to give lessons for those who wanted to learn how to draw or paint, and classes were often held on the lawn facing the water. Saturday nights found the guests at the Casino where they joined in the dancing or just sat and watched. The floor there was said to be the best in the area and was always crowded. Often a group would get together and go to Tampa to eat in one of the beautiful old Latin Quarter restaurants to enjoy their spicy Spanish foods, the music, and the flamenco dancers. Christmas was always a gala time and the inn was decorated from top to bottom with a huge tree in the lobby and gifts for everyone. Carols were enjoyed and many guests exchanged gifts.

Mr. and Mrs. Camp truly entertained their guests. They operated this popular Inn from 1921 until they closed in 1968, a sad day indeed for one and all.

Then came the depressing time of watching that stately old building fall into decay and ruin. Vandals broke windows, tore out plumbing, removed doors and anything else that was moveable. The police could not seem to cope with their destructive activities and the new owners, who had hoped to build an apartment complex, became so discouraged that before they could negotiate a sale, they had the structure demolished. It was a sorry sight to see, remembering how well it had been kept during the forty years the Camps had owned it. It seemed full of eerie sounds and sights — and walkers hurried past it in their evening strolls.

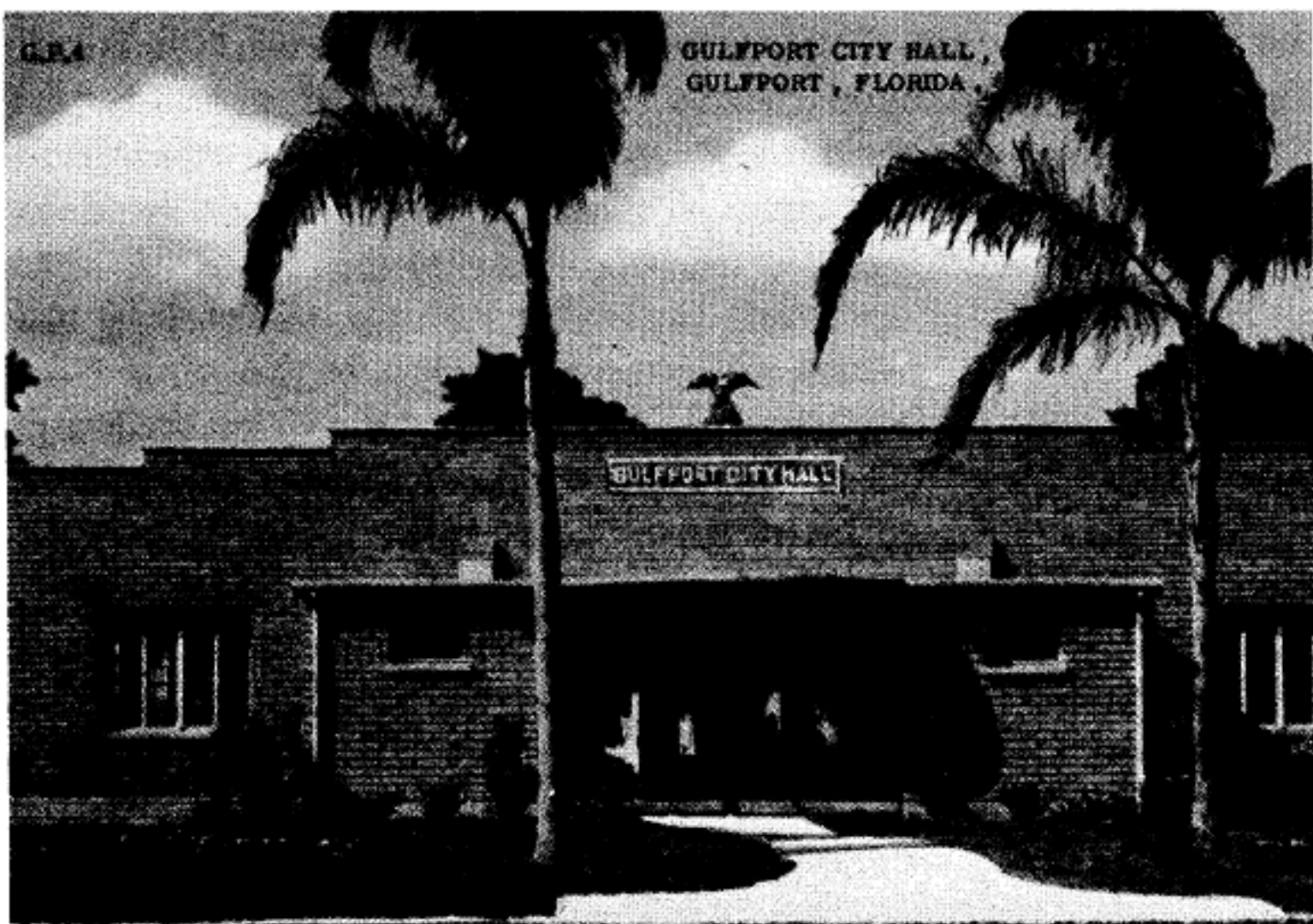
In 1974, "D-Day" for Boca Ciega Inn brought tears to the eyes of those who watched the bulldozer rip down the mag-



seasoned and sturdy building," there were only two bids and \$150 gave it to G. S. Wynns, Clearwater, who agreed to destroy it but who wanted to sell the windows and frames to his customers.

That same day, November 7, 1953, the new \$17,000 City Hall was dedicated while 200 to 300 people watched with pride as the flag was raised over it. Cutting the ribbons were Mrs. J. B. Steinwinder, 84, and her nephew, Walter Roberts, 71, who had lived here 54 years (the latter then still active in his plumbing business). Mrs. Steinwinder, whose father was Spanish sculptor Richard Strade, came to Gulfport from New Orleans before the town had a name. She said it took two days to get to Tampa in those days to get provisions, poking an ox team along. The cornerstone of the City Hall was set by Mayor Harold Fox, and the grey tint block, 8 x 16 x 16, inscribed with the date, contained newspapers and City documents.

Construction was authorized by Council to be done by City crews, directed by Councilman-at-Large Arthur J. Horan, Chairman of the Public Works Committee. Plans were drawn by Architect O. C. R. Stageberg. The lowest bid was \$39,000 but Council authorized only \$12,000 for the first part of the structure — to house offices and a vault 10x14 feet within 66'-4" x 36'-4". Later there would be an auditorium to seat 450, at an additional cost of \$12,000. The *Times*, Nov. 4, 1953, showed a picture of the Council seated on the rostrum



*The new City Hall, Gulfport*

nificent mahogany staircase, smash the once-glorious chandeliers, and destroy another landmark of once gracious and leisurely living here on our Gulfport waterfront.

— Allean Davis

## CHAPTER 18

### GULFPORT CITY HALLS (2)



*ANTIQUE IS THE EDIFICE — Gulfport's 40-year-old Town Hall, above, is due to go on the auction block Nov. 7 as the city's new, modern City Hall is dedicated. The old building, erected in 1913 when old-timers say less than 100 persons resided in the town, will be auctioned to the highest bidder.*

*(Times photo by Johnnie Evans)*

Yes, we have a picture of the first City Hall, built in 1913, and we reproduce it here. The winning bid was \$1,259.75 and it included a town lock-up for good measure. The structure resembled lines of early Orange Belt Railroad depot architecture, but it came into disrepute when modern building codes required more than it could offer. Old-timers were no doubt saddened as they saw it being auctioned off, then taken outside City limits. Many a burning issue was fought out there. Legend says irate citizens waited outside to take care of an early mayor, but no one remembers his name or his offense. The building was painted yellow, stood in Chase Park near the present shuffleboard courts. The young fry would stand with noses pressed against the windows to watch the happenings inside. In spite of strenuous efforts of Auctioneer Fox and his plug that this was indeed a "well-

with more than 100 citizens present at the first meeting in the new \$17,000 building, totally paid for! And we also show our present building which, because of the growth of the City of Gulfport and its administrative staff, must soon be enlarged to accommodate new personnel and equipment — for Gulfport is no longer a simple fishing village but a City of increasing population, heterogenous, alive and well!

— *Frances Purdy*

## CHAPTER 19

### GULFPORT MULTI-PURPOSE SENIOR CENTER

The history of Gulfport Multi-Purpose Senior Center is not a story of concrete, mortar and cement but instead is a reflection on changes of attitudes toward the elderly and perceptions of the aging process that have occurred in our community during the last decade.

The elderly in our society have been gradually disenfranchised by the natural evolution of our socio-economic system. Family units are disintegrating largely through pressures of social upward mobility. Neighboring markets have slowly disappeared and been replaced by distant shopping malls, transportation systems are mostly inaccessible, and Madison Avenue has ordained that to be young is good and old is to be avoided at all cost. Growing old gracefully has become a very difficult task!

Fortunately, there were a number of individuals in the City of Gulfport who, in the early seventies, became aware of the severe problems facing our senior citizens and proceeded to do something about it. On April 5, 1974, City Council passed Resolution R74-7 establishing a Senior Citizen Advisory Committee on Aging. Its purpose was to assist City administrators in recognizing and solving problems that faced the elderly of Gulfport by conducting local needs assessment studies and surveys. In less than two years, the Committee was instrumental in the creation of the following programs specifically designed to assist the elderly in our community: (1) Outreach; (2) Information and Referral; (3) Telephone Reassurance; (4) Meals on Wheels; and (5) Door-to-door Mini-Bus. By 1980, a congregate dining site was operating in the Presbyterian Church annex. Funding for the programs came from several sources, including the City General Fund, Title III-B and III-C of the 1965 Older American Act, Com-



munity Development Block grant, and client contributions.

The Advisory Committee had done its job very well. All these wonderful services were here; and they were there; and they were everywhere; and that was a problem! It was in 1979 that one of the members of the Advisory Committee commented how nice it would be if all the programs could be offered in one building. The seed was planted. A dream had begun. Efforts began immediately to make the dream a reality. But the odds seemed terribly slim. A new Administration was moving into the White House promising severe cut-backs in social programs. The Older American Act, Title V, Senior Center Constructions Funds had just been eliminated, and the six-year Gulfport capital improvement plan made no provisions for such a facility.

The only possible funding source was the Community Development Block Grant Program in which Gulfport was an entitlement city. These funds had generally been utilized for housing rehabilitation and neighborhood improvements such as sidewalk construction. In 1981, after careful deliberation, it was decided that future C.D. funds would be channeled toward construction of a Multi-Purpose Senior Center. In order to obtain sufficient funds for construction, the City entered into an agreement with County Community Development officials to advance Gulfport's 1984 allocation to 1983.

Everything appeared to be falling into place very nicely until it came to site selection. Chase Park, Wood Ibis Park, and the Beach Boulevard Esplanade were the only available sites. Personal preferences of the City staff and many residents leaned toward Chase Park. Expert architectural analysis of that area concluded, however, that it would not provide adequate parking, that the G.E.M.S. and Scout buildings would have to be moved at great risk and cost, and that it would require extensive site preparation. From the fiscal perspective it came down to either the Beach Boulevard Esplanade or no building at all.

The decision to build on the Beach Boulevard site was not universally accepted and ownership of the land was challenged in court which delayed the project by several months. But, after ground was broken April 12, 1983, construction of the 6200 sq. ft. facility progressed rapidly. It was completed only one week beyond the projected completion date which in itself was a remarkable feat.

On October 11, 1983, the Gulfport Multi-Purpose Senior Center was officially dedicated and opened to the public.

What had been a wishful comment and distant dream had become reality. A city that only ten years before was not even aware that a large segment of its elderly population was facing severe problems had responded by first recognizing that those problems did indeed exist and then proceeded to do something to solve those problems.

The Multi-Purpose Senior Center became an instant focal point for the elderly of the City by offering a wide variety of programs which were specifically designed to enhance their quality of life. Every day an average of 600 elderly residents are served by agencies and programs that operate from the Center. Neighborly Senior Services provides congregate dining and Meals on Wheels; Family Service Center provides family consulting; Red Cross provides health screening; the City of Gulfport Social Service Department provides door-to-door transportation (G.E.M.S.), outreach, information and referral, telephone reassurance, Social Security assistance, housing rehabilitation, recreational and educational activities, Gulfcoast Legal Services provides legal assistance; Mental Health Services provides counseling services; A.A.R.P. provides income tax assistance. The Gulfport Senior Citizen Club, the Newcomers Club, the Community Club, Friends of the Library, the Bridge Club, American War Mothers, the Russian American Club, the A.A. group, and the Gulfport Chamber of Commerce all use the Senior Center as a meeting place.

The Multi-Purpose Senior Center is operated by the City Social Service Department. The facility is open Monday through Friday from 8:00 A.M. to 9:00 P.M. Weekends are available on a reservation basis only.

The existence of a Senior Center reflects a new and certainly a more positive attitude toward the elderly of our community. Today's senior citizens are a vital and productive part of our society. Anyone observing the activities at our Multi-Purpose Senior Center will come away convinced that growing older is not only inevitable but it can also be something to be enjoyed.

— *Ted Potyka*,  
Director of City of Gulfport  
Social Services Department

\* \* \*

Asked to comment on the name of this building in honor of his wife's memory, Mayor Emeritus Clymer said it was

because she had always shared her musical talents by playing the piano at many club meetings and at nursing homes — often accompanied by their daughter, Patsy, with her melodia. He had been happy with the site selection because of proximity to our fine Library, named to honor the memory of Marie Bryan who served many years as Librarian and who, in fact, had been most instrumental in establishing Library services in this community. Because of fund shortage, some needed space had to be cut from the original plans for the building and whenever possible Council will surely authorize extensions to provide more small rooms for meetings.

## CHAPTER 20

### PRIGUN APARTMENT 2938 Beach Boulevard

Eloise Robeson talked with Miss L. Lewis some time in 1975 and found out that on June 15, 1912, Mr. Alex Cussen acquired this property which was then swampland from the Florida government. In 1912, he got a loan on it and built what became a grocery store with his family living upstairs. On June 9, 1921, Miss Leora D. Lewis, in real estate in St. Petersburg at that time, bought it. In the 1930's, the building was remodeled and became the Florida Playthings, Inc. with Messrs. Frank and William Moulton as partners. At first they made wooden toys and later added buttons and bag frames of shell to their inventory. In the 1940's, the building was again remodeled, this time into four apartments and as such is still in use today.

As we go to press, this building is being gutted and refurbished and later will be designated as a historic site — with some others here described.

— *Eloise Robeson*

## CHAPTER 21

### SCOUT HALL

The former Community Hall, now known as Scout Hall at 5315 28th Avenue S., was first constructed as a Pentecostal church. Built out of the hard pine cut in the area and milled at our local saw mill, the building has one large, high ceiling room with a small stage or altar area. On either side of the stage are small rooms, one serving as a cloakroom, or now a



locker room, while the other has been made into a kitchen. Used as a church from the time of its construction in the early 1920's in the 2600 block on 49th Street near the Gaskins family, the building was given to the City for public use in 1937.

Jerome Gerard, the Public Works Director for the City of Gulfport, had the building moved to its present location. They had to put cross-bracing in the large open room to keep it squared. It was placed on the former location of the original City Hall, where it still is today. Restrooms were added to the rear of the building, and it was made ready for use by the citizens of Gulfport as a Community Hall.

Just about every type of meeting and event was held in this building, from pot-luck dinners to beauty contests, to heated political debates, not to mention socials and war bond drives. This was the center of activity for the people for many years until the new Community Center was built in 1964. The City Council then turned the building over to the Boy and Girl Scouts of Gulfport as a meeting hall, thus becoming one of the very few communities to provide a building and its grounds for this use.

— *Judith C. Ryerson*

## CHAPTER 22

### FROM ROLYAT TO STETSON LAW SCHOOL

#### — An Old Feudal Castle —

Boom days of the early twenties brought ten hotels to southern Pinellas County. Jack Taylor opened his sprawling, luxurious, Spanish-styled hotel on January 1, 1926, in Gulfport. It was lauded as one of the most unusual and picturesque in the nation and one of the most beautiful in the southeast. It was surrounded by acreage lushly covered with palmetto, pines, and palms. Several large Spanish-styled homes were built nearby as the land increased in value. Mr. I. M. (Jack) Taylor hired architect Paul Reed of Miami who designed the buildings which were part of and within a wall of varying heights and textures featuring medieval Spanish architecture. Cavernous halls and majestic arches and balconies surrounded courtyards and gardens of tropical greenery accented with fountains. Materials for construction were imported from all parts of the world. It was reported that century-old, handmade roof tiles (shaped over the artisans' knees) were brought from real castles in Spain. The

lounge had unusual, detailed decorations and a large fireplace at one end was a reproduction of one designed by artist El Greco for his Spanish studio. The lobby resembled a monastery chapel with prayer recesses and balcony and inner arches. According to one article of 1926, floor tiles in the lobby and other parts of the Rolyat were dated "presumably from about 700 A.D. during the Roman Occupation of Spain." The main dining room had massive hand-hewn beams with high arched windows and full-length alcoves resembling a great cathedral. Two towers represented a 30-foot-diameter granery, and the larger, octagonal tower was a reproduction of Seville's golden "Torre Del Oro" tower.

The well-known John Wanamaker & Company of Philadelphia was given the task of providing this unique structure with furnishings which they acquired from all over the world. Two huge Talaveras vases (named for the Spanish city of their origin) stood as sentries at the Rolyat (Taylor spelled backwards) hotel entrance, with a third displayed in the lobby. Only these three vases were owned privately, with six others being the property of the National Museum.

Mr. C. D. Willson was designated as the new manager of the Rolyat and supervised all installations of furnishings and equipment. The Rolyat's staff was assembled from the world's finest hotels. Spanish table girls were selected and the doorman was a gentleman from the Philippines. The latter was often seen with his dog which was noted for sporting a Sherlock Holmes-style pipe.

The property on which this structure stands was purchased in 1925 for \$270,000 from Walter Fuller and his partner, Philadelphia banker George A. Allen. According to Fuller's account, the land extended from 5th Avenue N. down to Villa Grande Avenue. An additional \$195,000 option included unimproved Coreytown (now part of South Pasadena) and all of west Gulfport, including property where Pasadena Golf Course is now located. The story is told that when earnest money was needed, Jack Taylor's wife, Evelyn, strolled to a corner of the office, rolled down her blue silk stocking, and removed a \$10,000 dollar bill. In the process, Fuller said, several similar bills fell to the floor and she quickly retrieved and redeposited them. As the story goes, only \$5,000 was needed, but no one had \$5,000 change, so the Taylors wrote a check for \$5,000. The \$10,000 bill was held overnight until the check could be approved the next day and then the \$10,000 bill was returned to Evelyn Taylor.

According to a story of the day, the glamorous opening of the hotel included actors, opera stars, and well-known personalities such as Walter Hagen and Babe Ruth. Mrs. L. Ross of Gulfport remembers, "It was a Sunday when it opened. I was there!" For a time the hotel, with its golf courses and riding stables, attracted the elite.

Then came the bust of 1927!

The hotel survived for a short time and then closed. Wanamaker & Company retrieved some furnishings and then the hotel stood empty.

In 1929, the structure was bought by the Florida Military Academy of Jacksonville. In a recent interview, the Noel brothers, Niel and Eddie of Gulfport, recalled arriving at the train station and marching over to the luxurious hotel. The station was located where the present Pasadena Avenue meets the railroad tracks. The brothers said it was a mighty comfortable change to have private baths and springs in their beds. Drill fields soon surrounded the hotel. The brothers remembered the building was self-sufficient with even its own ice plant. Diesel-powered electric generators were in the north end of the buildings. Rooms were heated by steam radiators, and the Noel brothers mentioned that every room boasted a screen door. Memorabilia of the Florida Military Academy is currently displayed at the Stetson Law School Library.

In a 1974 *St. Petersburg Times* article, Dick Bothwell wrote that Dr. William Casler remembered being a student at both the military academy and the law school. The columnist wrote further that Casler reminisced, "When Florida moonlight goes to work on the red-tiled roofs and arched passageways of the old building, the scene is romantic indeed — and was never more so than at cadet hops. . . . The guys always had dates," said Casler. "In those days, the girls loved uniforms. We'd have a Thanksgiving hop, a Christmas formal, and a military ball just before graduation. An awful lot of cadets ended up marrying their sweethearts — I remember those 17 and 18-year-old seniors at FMA as being men." Dr. Casler served four years as a cadet, three as an FMA faculty member, and three as a law student.

In 1952, the Stetson University of Deland purchased the Florida Military Academy complex.

September 20, 1954, approximately a hundred students were greeted to the Stetson University College of Law in Gulfport. There had been intense competition as to the new



location for the Stetson Law School. In the interim, buildings had again been sitting idle and empty and were run down. A group of local businessmen contributed \$100,000 for renovation, and Stetson University accepted the offer to relocate to Gulfport. A Board of Overseers of the College of Law was created and charged with setting policy of the college. Funds were offered by such as the C. A. Dana family who donated \$250,000 toward a library (they eventually contributed over \$1-million for a new administration building); \$1-million was contributed by Harvey Firestone III for classrooms, a court room, a swimming pool, and other facilities. The H. Jackson Crummer Building was given as a memorial from Roy E. Crummer.

In 1975, a period of renovation and refurbishment gave a new aged look to some of the inner rooms. A young Clearwater artist, Dino DiLiberti, worked to restore the ceiling beams, much as Michelangelo had done in the Sistine Chapel in the Vatican. DiLiberti used special pigments to recreate the old decorations in soft hues which created the aged look.

The landmark has served other purposes through the years. Recollections mentioned that in 1954 the campus was used as a setting for a movie about a Southern military academy. Carol Baker, the movie actress, was an onlooker as her husband, Jack Garfein, directed the movie "End As A Man" with Ben Gazarra, George Peppard, and Mark Richmond. Another unusual recollection: Nathan White, a native of Gulfport, remembered his mother as being in charge of manning the high tower at all times for the purpose of spotting aircraft during World War II.

The buildings of the old Rolyat Hotel are bounded by 15th Avenue on the south (with property extending to Gulfport Boulevard), and 61st Street on the east (with property extending to Hull Street and 13th Avenue on the north). The towers majestically overlook much of Gulfport, and still lend an air of an old feudal castle of medieval Spain.

(Additional information can be found in records housed in the Gulfport Historical Society building. Some data is courtesy of Stetson Law School clippings, interviews, and personal conversations.)

— *Genevieve L. Smith*

## CHAPTER 23

### THE CASINO — HEART AND HUB OF GULFPORT

The building of the Casino became the turning point in the growth of today's Gulfport. Between 1902 and 1903, Mr. F. A. Davis, who had developed the trolley system in St. Petersburg, dreamed of extending his line to include a trip of interest and make his line financially successful. He visualized a boat ride to Pass-A-Grille where there were lovely white beaches, excellent fishing, a great variety of shells, swimming, and even a fine hotel where his patrons could buy an extraordinary meal. He tested the shore all around Boca Ciega Bay and found the best water depth at the point where the Casino now stands. He immediately started to secure funds and the land which is now called Beach Blvd. There was great excitement over this trolley project which would bring new life to Gulfport — then called Veteran's City.

Extensive filling had to be done to bring the water line to its present location, for at that time it was just below the building now known as The Cedars which is three blocks north of the Casino. Our first Casino was built in 1905, east of the present site and beside a pier. The trolley tracks were built along the wharf to the Casino itself where passengers boarded boats for Pass-A-Grille. Signs on the trolley cars indicated they were called "Dock and Spa" and because the power lines extended out to the Casino from the street, the Casino was called the electric dock. That was the beginning of electric lighting in this area. This was the most southern point of trolley service.

The south side of the Casino on the Bay had boat docks for the larger excursion boats to land and take on passengers, as well as mail and freight. The trolley trip wound through orange groves and wooded land, taking about an hour, and the boat ride another hour — all for one dollar! It was an exciting trip and a huge boon to the tourist trade. Mr. Davis had the Casino built as a stopover, but it soon became the main attraction with performing bands, City get-togethers and, on Sundays it housed the first church services — now the First United Methodist Church of Gulfport located on the corner of 53rd Street and 28th Avenue S.

The first Casino withstood heavy winds, storms, and bad weather until the hurricane of 1921, when it ended up on the beach, a broken pile of kindling wood. The second Casino

was built in 1923, a flimsy structure on stilts over marshy land, but it was as popular as its predecessor. Many people remember the Merry Makers' Orchestra which played for dances there between 1926 and 1961. Camille Thompson was the leader of that orchestra and still plays matinees in a four-piece musical group. She remembers how the Casino swayed to the one-step and when a square dance was in progress, everyone wondered if the floor would hold up under all those stomping feet. That floor was the finest for many a mile and people came from far and near, in spite of the sway. When the building no longer met building code regulations, it was condemned and torn down.

In 1934, the Federal Economic Rehabilitation Administration teamed with the Civil Works Administration of Gulfport to build a new Casino, and the third one was dedicated in December 1935. Mr. George S. Hill was commissioned to do the murals, in spite of opposition since some of his work had been refused for hanging in the Circuit Court in Clearwater.

The Casino has remained a chief source of income for many years. In 1950, City Council approved immediate repairs for a leaky roof and to enlarge the dance floor to better accommodate the crowds. Other changes included addition of a bandshell and air conditioning. Far and wide, people know about the wonderful dance floor and have recollections of ladies in beautiful gowns with skirts billowing and swaying to the best of the music.

In 1960, Peggy Dye took over the management of the restaurant, and Cecil Jewell assumed supervision with the title of Municipal Enterprise Manager. In 1969, a real controversy arose when Johnny Braun was fired. His music on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays had brought twinkling toes from everywhere, but attendance had dropped off and the City blamed him. His fans were furious and staged a boycott until the City reinstated him. His fans were delighted. Chuck Warren's group played Friday and Sunday nights and the Mickey Dona Trio on Wednesdays — but they hadn't been the same. Usually a paid attendance of 400 was average until 1974 when there was a fifty-cent increase — and it hurt. In 1977, the City changed the "No Alcoholic Beverage" policy and attendance again rose to approximately 300 a night. Esther Johnson picked up tickets on dance nights for over twenty-three years!

Where else can one see people in many kinds of costumes doing waltzes, foxtrots, cha-chas, swing, and other dances —



often at the same time? There is no other floor like it — nor are there so many kinds of people enjoying one another as right here in Gulfport on the beach! These buildings witnessed many romances in their budding stage, sheltered many from winds and rains and loneliness, and they have been the gathering places for political speeches and social doings.

At this time the City rents #111 to various organizations such as the Lions Club for Thursday bingo, for boxing, wrestling, and for card parties — but the chief use and most widely acclaimed use is for dancing.

“With neon lights, in colored tights, they come to do gymnastics; In glad array they also play and trip the light fantastic.” And the beat goes on!

— *Doris Brown*

## CHAPTER 24

### THE CEDARS of 2938 Beach Boulevard

Quite a girl in 1905! Exterminators recently crawled under the building — no way could any termite chew through those massive beams, like petrified wood and the ceilings are high! Some quarters have been three or four-room suites for elegant families who came for the winters when this was a popular hotel. Woodwork has been painted a million times — floors are not level anymore. Nancy Younger's parents owned it and she and Bill wanted to buy it but their parents wouldn't sell to them. Harry Katz bought it and later he sold it to them. She said, “We were working toward a school for Christianity.” Nancy was a registered nurse and her husband a veteran of the Korean War. They could take 34 guests in this building which they had remodeled into a retirement home, but they had only 18 guests and got discouraged and sold. The new manager became Theresa Chichester-Darrell, the daughter of missionaries.

Mr. and Mrs. Frank Ypma were interviewed in September 1974, following the above release, and as far as they knew, this had been a resort hotel, then a veterans' haven, and finally came under the influence of the Baptist Church, which local group hired them. They offered room and board, \$160-\$200 a month, and gave maid service with weekly charge of linens.

Miss Florence Round, R.N., speaking about the building,

said the first part was built in 1911 or 1912, and the second part two years later. It had been the Bayview Hotel and had an excellent dining room known widely as "The Piping Hot." Stella Tamm recalled that she, her mother and others made Red Cross dressings there during the war and later that group formed the Woman's Club of Gulfport in 1941.

When the hotel closed, Mr. and Mrs. Zwick ran the nursing home. Miss Round spent winters here in town with relatives and Florence worked at the Cedars helping to upgrade it to become a hospital — "the best in the area." In 1950 she bought it, continuing to implement regulations for hospitals and employing fine doctors and nurses and the best available domestic staff. She put in bathrooms, had the place insulated, and spent \$6,000 on an elevator. Her niece, Grace Aylesworth, remembers that Miss Round had initiated special diets for the patients because she was able to convince her sister, Annie Laurie, to work with her — the latter having had plenty of dietary training during her Salvationist years! Helen Evans worked for the hospital nine years and talked freely about her recollections, including the fact that Miss Round gave the medical staff splendid dinners prior to their monthly staff meetings. Among the physicians who cared for patients at this hospital were Doctors Baker, Spoto, Rausch, Parrish, Mench, McDonough, and Grace.

In July, 1984, Eloise Robeson found out that Crisella DeBeru had it for three years sometime after Miss Round sold it in 1964 because she could no longer comply with state regulations — hospitals had to be of masonry construction. In 1978, Bill and Jane Scheblin bought it and had it licensed as a congregate living home. Three years later, they sold it to Dorothy Hellen, but it fell into disrepair and the Scheblins bought it back in 1983.

Presently there are 32 rooms, 38 beds, and they have a waiting list. There are two full-time cooks, two waitresses, and several aides who help residents with their personal care. These owners have spent many thousands of dollars sprucing up both outside and inside of this fantastic old building. One senses a peaceful happiness among the guests and notices that many thoughts have been given to providing as pleasant an environment as is possible. Our Library Director and a volunteer are establishing an outreach program of suitable book reviews and traveling library. The public is welcome to share meals by appointment and always visitors for residents are greeted gladly by their relatives and friends and the staff.

Now, in May 1985, another change is happening — new owners are changing the type of guests to be admitted and they are renovating the whole structure. Welcome, Mrs. Joanne Jones as the Manager, and we anticipate opening day for what should become quite an attraction on our Beach Blvd. once again. It is renamed the Suncoast Inn!

— *Eloise Robeson*

## CHAPTER 25

### THE COMMUNITY CENTER

The old Community Center of the early 1930's was located in the 5100 block of 26th Avenue S. where Pastor C. Miller held Pentecostal church services. Sometime in 1935 it was moved to 5315 28th Avenue S., and Council, Chamber of Commerce, the Lions and some social clubs met there until 1956-57 when the building was turned over to the Scouts. They continue to use it and the splendid open spaces around the building.

It was then decided to build a larger community and recreation center, and in 1966, the Community Center was built at 5730 Shore Boulevard S. on our beautiful Boca Ciega Bay.

It has a large auditorium and gymnasium, a kitchen, three meeting rooms, and a small office. The social clubs of Gulfport and many from St. Petersburg hold monthly meetings there. It has become a popular scene for weddings, for many civic meetings, for bazaars, dances, yoga, sewing, and other classes. It has been used for wrestling matches for the youth, for boxing, and, of course, for basketball. In the summer the Center is turned over to the children and they enjoy all kinds of games, sports, and many types of classes such as cooking, sewing, and art.

In 1983, when GMSC opened, meetings of adults were encouraged to move to free the building for after school until 10 p.m. activities. The auditorium continues to be available for shows by the Community Players and for large card parties, bazaars, and state picnics — but increasingly, these events are to be scheduled in the Casino. The movement of these schedules clearly indicates Council's aim to make the best possible use of its buildings and to meet the needs of its residents to the best of our somewhat limited facilities, including money. At the time of this writing, it is hoped a more



appropriate stage can be built and that additional office space can become available.

— *Mary Drake, Others*

## CHAPTER 26

### THE McLELLAN HOUSE

In 1981 we purchased the property at 5619 Shore Blvd. S. which we most affectionately referred to as “The Gulfport Dump”! It wasn’t long before we learned we had a very important location of about thirty years’ of Gulfport history. A building permit dated 2/20/46, found in the attic, was just the beginning of what we would discover; more importantly, people kept coming to tell us about their memories of this place.

Drs. Grace and Colin McLellan, Naturopaths of 3120 Beach Blvd., were granted the permit to build a dwelling/physicians’ office . . . and so was born THE GULFPORT CLINIC.

During these four years we have really learned to almost know these unusual people. It would seem most of those who visit our beach want to come across the street to tell us about “Dr. Grace” and “Doc.” They had opposite personalities, perfectly complementing one another. In total harmony they represented sensitivity, understanding, sympathy, affection, and an appropriate response to hundreds of people of all ages in and around Gulfport.

We have heard about how Dr. Grace enjoyed gardening, taking special delight in certain varieties of flowers. She apparently had an artistic flair, dabbling with painting, and she enjoyed traveling. Only superlative adjectives are applied to describe her — wonderful, distinguished, dedicated, honorable, tender, considerate, and more. A box of Get Well cards (another attic “find”) testifies to widely scattered affection for her. Dr. Grace died in January, 1979, having spent the last 35 of her 83 years in Gulfport. She was survived by her husband, two sisters, and one brother.

Stories about “Doc” reveal a broad variety of interests other than medical. He was an avid sailor and built his own *Yellow Banana* (we found the rudder and sails in the garage!). He was instrumental in organizing both the Kids and Kubs and the Boomerangs (story elsewhere in this book), and we hear he remained involved in both of these softball teams while his health permitted. It was he who induced a number of musicians to gather to play at a pavilion at the beach. His contributions there were on his banjo. Musicians continue to

play for both dancers and listeners many afternoons at our beach. When we purchased 5619, there were signs across the street which proclaimed, "Reserved for Musicians," another of Doc's deeds.

We've heard of the consolation in times of illness and bereavement which Doc gave under the great eucalyptus tree in the front yard, and also of his sadness when he laid to rest his favorite dog, Putzy, where now there grows a Cuban laurel.

In 1979 this house was sold and Doc moved into a cottage he owned next door. He died the next year.

We hope the McLellans are looking down with pleasure at the enhancement of their former pride and joy for we have made many improvements here. The address plaque "5619" over the front entry is original as are the two planters on the front patio. Various light fixtures and cabinets throughout the building are also signs of the past, fondly remembered by those who were cared for here in many ways. These noteworthy Gulfport residents, Dr. Grace McLellan and Dr. Colin McLellan, gave much to our community and it is fitting that they should have a permanent tribute in this book.

— *Kali Gillespie*

## CHAPTER 27

### THE GULFPORT HISTORICAL MUSEUM

Our City has had four names, our Museum, five! First it was the Methodist Church, built in 1910, then Scout Hall, Red Cross Building, GEMS Building, and now, our Museum — located at the corner of 28th Avenue S. and 53rd Street. In 1956 this well-worn building became inadequate for the Methodist congregation, as you have read elsewhere in this volume (under chapter heading "Churches"), and they offered it to the City who moved it across the street to the present location and designated it to be used by the Boy Scouts. In 1964, when the Scouts were given the use of the former Community Hall (formerly the Pentecostal Church), the Red Cross and Civil Air Patrol received its use and the Scouts became the westerly neighbor.

About thirty-five or more women sewed Red Cross supplies weekly for about ten years, which times are easily recalled by "Marj" Cavanaugh who was the faithful director of that enterprise until her husband's illness forced her to retire. Gulfport became one of the largest production centers in the state, releasing about 10,000 Red Cross items yearly

for distribution to our Veterans' Hospital at Bay Pines and to other hospitals and nursing homes in the area. At one time City Council planned to destroy the building, but "Marj," Elizabeth Hitchison and others vigorously protested and thus saved the property for the Red Cross' continuing use. Those women really went to work to improve the property — begging gifts of curtains, linoleum, paint and such, and using them! Between the City and the Red Cross, safety of the building was improved and Tuesday mornings found happy women working together to help those who needed it.

When Council initiated GEMS (minibus transportation for senior adults), the west corner office was given to Ted Potyka and Helen Rozmus for their use in managing that super program. Gradually, the use emphasis shifted from Red Cross to GEMS — and so the fourth name!

Completion of the Gulfport Multipurpose Senior Center in October 1983 meant that the GEMS office moved into it with other Gulfport services for the elderly. Our pioneering President, Catherine Hickman, approached Council offering to lease the building in the name of the Gulfport Historical Society in order to develop a Museum. A dollar-a-year lease was co-signed and by Nostalgia Day, 1984, we could officially have the ribbon-cutting and dedication ceremony, with about 200 people enjoying their third such day, for remembering together!

To say that the building was suitable for much of our use when the lease was signed would be quite inaccurate! But volunteers rallied to help when inspired by Cathy's dynamism and direction. Weekend cleaning and repairing events were scheduled and among those most responsible for transforming the property are Bill Hurst and friends, George Payne (who gave much of what we have *and* sold it in flea markets), Walter Brooks, John Tonkin, George Prigun, Keith Hickman, and Lum Atkinson. Women who helped with outside improvements also did a lot inside — scrubbing too well-worn floors, clearing cupboards and shelves, cleaning kitchen gear, and more. Remembered for their special help are Margaret Brooks, Coleen Camp, Mary Atkinson, Judy Ryerson, Yvonne Johnson, and Johanna Schneidt. Some unable to help with these chores brought food for the "workers" and provided the supportive cheering section. Continuous repairs, including painting, are necessities as much as insurance in old buildings like this one. Members have been unstinting in their gifts of time and "antiques" — the life of our



Museum really depends upon such continuing care.

When it became practical, Agnes Conron was named Curator, and it was possible to have the Museum open Tuesdays from 2:00 to 4:00 p.m. and by appointment. We hope that by October, 1985, we shall have four open hours three days a week. Without adequate air conditioning, though, it is uncomfortable to use the building during the summer months. We are indeed fortunate to have Jan Cook helping us with her rich background in Museum work in St. Petersburg. And we are recruiting volunteers to serve as hostesses in the Fall. The Society meets alternate months for programs; the Board of Directors meets monthly.

— *Frances Purdy*

## CHAPTER 28

### THE GULFPORT PUBLIC LIBRARY

Prior to 1935, Mrs. Julia Luckey, an early resident of Gulfport, recognized the need for a library. In a small room in back of the drugstore, then located at the corner of Beach Boulevard and 29th Avenue S., she started that library by donating books from her own collection and by soliciting money from friends who were interested in the project. When her house burned, she moved away and the little library passed out of existence.

In 1935, Mayor Andrew Potter called a group of citizens and this group formed a Library Board, with Mrs. Marguerite as Chairman. That Board was not town-directed or elected, but made up of people willing to work for their dream — a LIBRARY! By May, 1935, under direction from their appointed Librarian, Mrs. Margaret Clees, 1500 books were shelved and catalogued in a little one-room office building previously used by a disenchanted real estate broker. From a population of 1,000, 300 took out library cards. Mrs. Bart Bryan, Mrs. Andrew Potter, Mrs. Kathryn Thorne, and Miss Betty Montigny were among many who worked diligently. Captain Walter Williams raised money when possible by having moonlight cruises on his *Don*. Later, Mr. and Mrs. O. B. O'Brien and Mrs. Mert Barrs (nee B. Montigny) served as Librarians.

However, it wasn't long before more space was needed. Joseph Kane offered the City a five-room bungalow to be used as a library in trade for the one-room office building — if the City would move the two structures. The City

approved, as long as the Board would provide \$50.00. That money was raised and in 1941 the transfer was accomplished. The cottage, now located at the corner of DeLett and Beach Boulevard, became the Library for many years. The spacious front porch was the scene of many children's activities all summer. Mrs. Violet Reddus served as Librarian for a short period, with Mrs. Marie Bryan succeeding her. She served faithfully in many capacities until her death in 1966.

Like the old woman in the shoe, the Library needed more space. The first move was to enclose the porch; that was sufficient for only a short time. An estimate of \$3,000 was given to add to the existing building. All Gulfport pitched in to help — dinners, dances, card parties, teas, tag days — and Gulfport did it! Some funds came from Council and the wing was added, and dedicated February 10, 1956, by Mayor A. L. Anderson.

With the addition of managerial form of government, the City appointed an Advisory Board and took over the full financial responsibility for the Library. Again, years and growing population proved that facility to be inadequate. Walter Fuller owned the land where the present Library is and he turned it over to his friend, Bart Bryan, to be deeded to the City for the purpose of putting up a modern building. The City approved a budget of \$135,000 for the building and a generous resident provided \$6,100 for the furnishings. Ground was broken January 2, 1970, and the building was completed in 1976 — dedicated to Marie Bryan in recognition of her faithfulness to her dream. Folks from Gulfport to Maine came to hear the address by Mayor "Bud" Markham. At last we had a modern building, an ideal location beautifully landscaped, staffed by a wonderful group of women: Director Norma Lamb, Doris Kevin, Karen Aust (Children's Librarian), Elaine Sampson, Lois Cordasco, and aides Kay Boatwright and Alethea Lipscomb. We are indeed proud of our Library, our Staff and Volunteers who made it a very special place.

In the foreseeable future we must restructure the entrance, provide space for offices, equipment, and meetings. We need covered parking and an area for children's services — growing continuously as our City's residency gets younger. We need more space for the monthly art exhibits arranged by our "Friends." So, dear reader, help us attain our present dreams and support our financial drive when it materializes — and Thank You!

— Ruby Walker

## CHAPTER 29

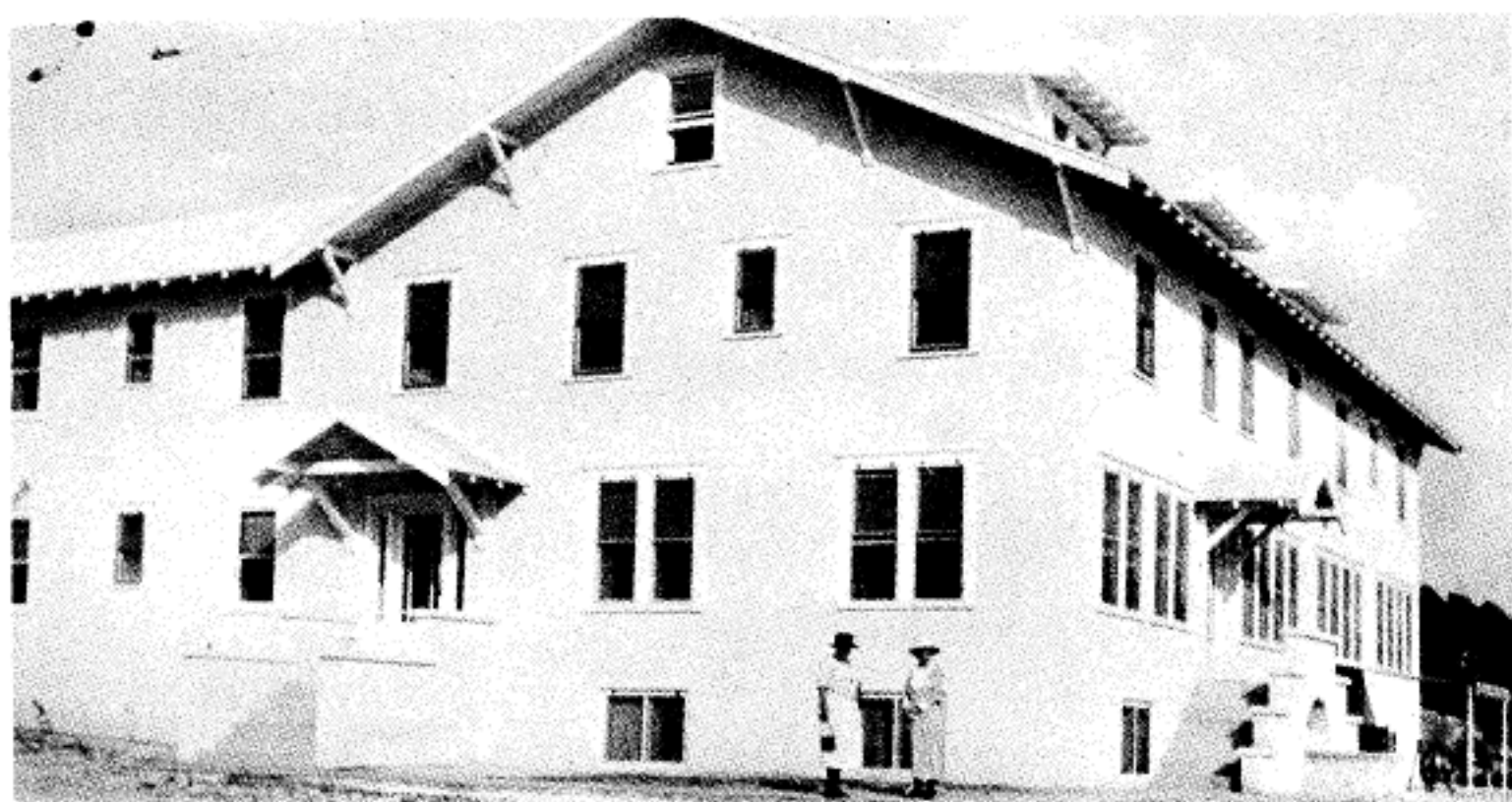
## THE WHITBECK DAIRY

"Jo" Pippin told us about the Whitbecks and their dairy which was on Disston Street (49th) at 25th and 26th Avenues, where now there are lots of new small houses! Mr. and Mrs. Whitbeck had bought the little house Ermatinger had moved from St. Petersburg when they came here from Pennsylvania. They came for her health — she had tuberculosis. They had only one pitcher pump, no pasteurization, of course, but there was a dipping vat up Disston where Goody's Goodies used to be, because the law said cattle had to be put through some chemical solution to get rid of ticks. They had lots of chickens, too, as most folks did, but later the City ruled them out along with pigs, from within City limits. When one of the Whitbeck children had diphtheria, Holland came to placard the house, but she stood him off and they went right on delivering milk (who knew then how diphtheria was spread?). They sold milk for five cents a gallon, and Whitbeck told Nathan White's mother that "Ethel, long as you've got children and I've got cows giving milk, you'll have milk." She'd asked him to stop delivering because she just couldn't pay for it. He came at five every morning, but one day he didn't because his good cow died and the pump ran dry!

Mrs. Whitbeck was a fine lady. She visited shut-ins for the First Presbyterian Church in St. Petersburg, even though she had a displaced hip and had to use a walker. She drove a gray English car and gave lots of fruit away, especially their mangoes. The present Scout Hall used to be a Pentecostal Church, and Mrs. Whitbeck played the organ there for services. Dr. Rausch and his son lived in a house north of the Whitbecks. The doctor worked mostly at Suncoast Manor with Dr. McGibony. He charged fifty cents a house visit, but once Whitbeck fired him and hurt his feelings, they were never friends again.

— *Frances Purdy*

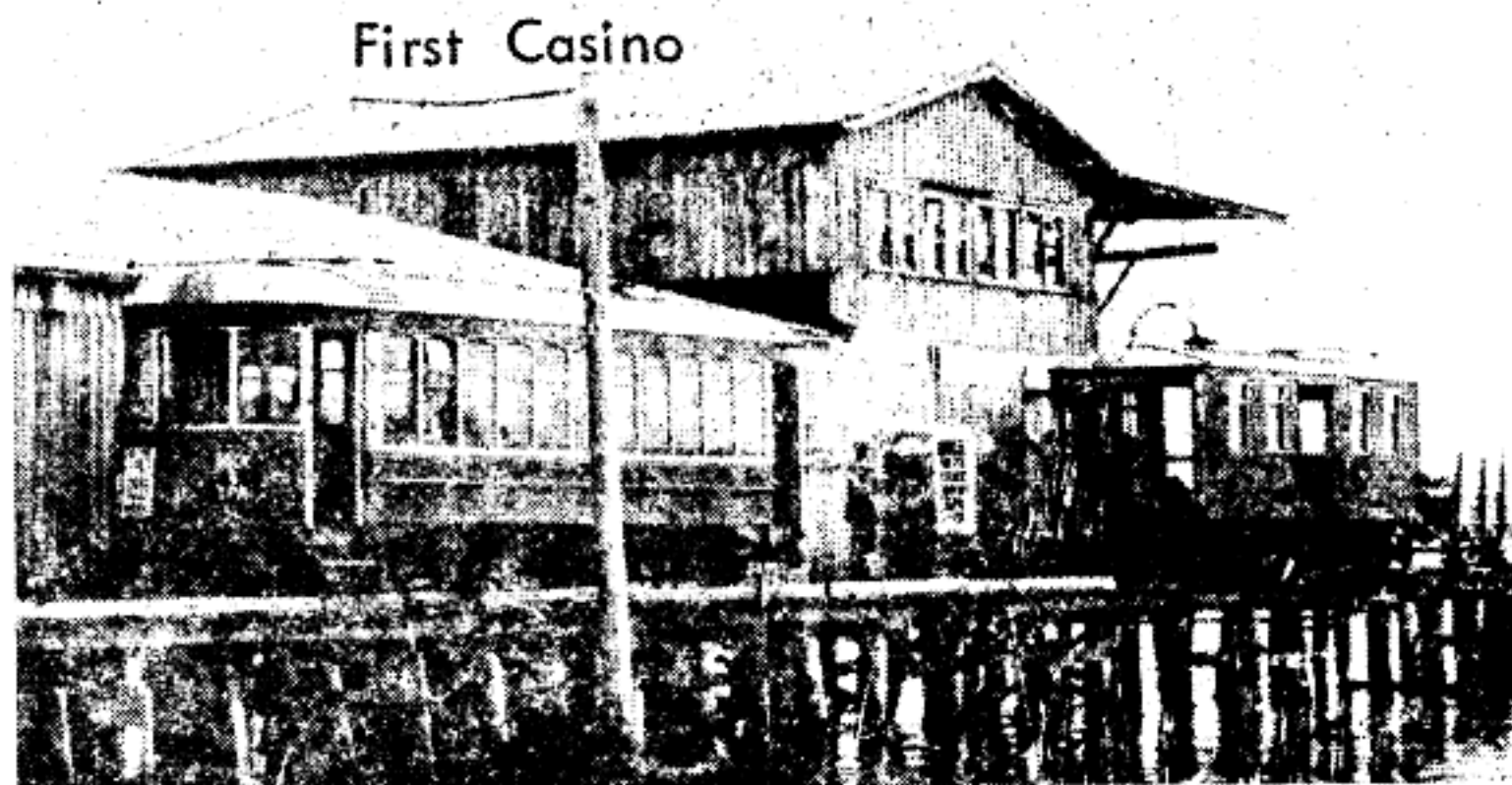




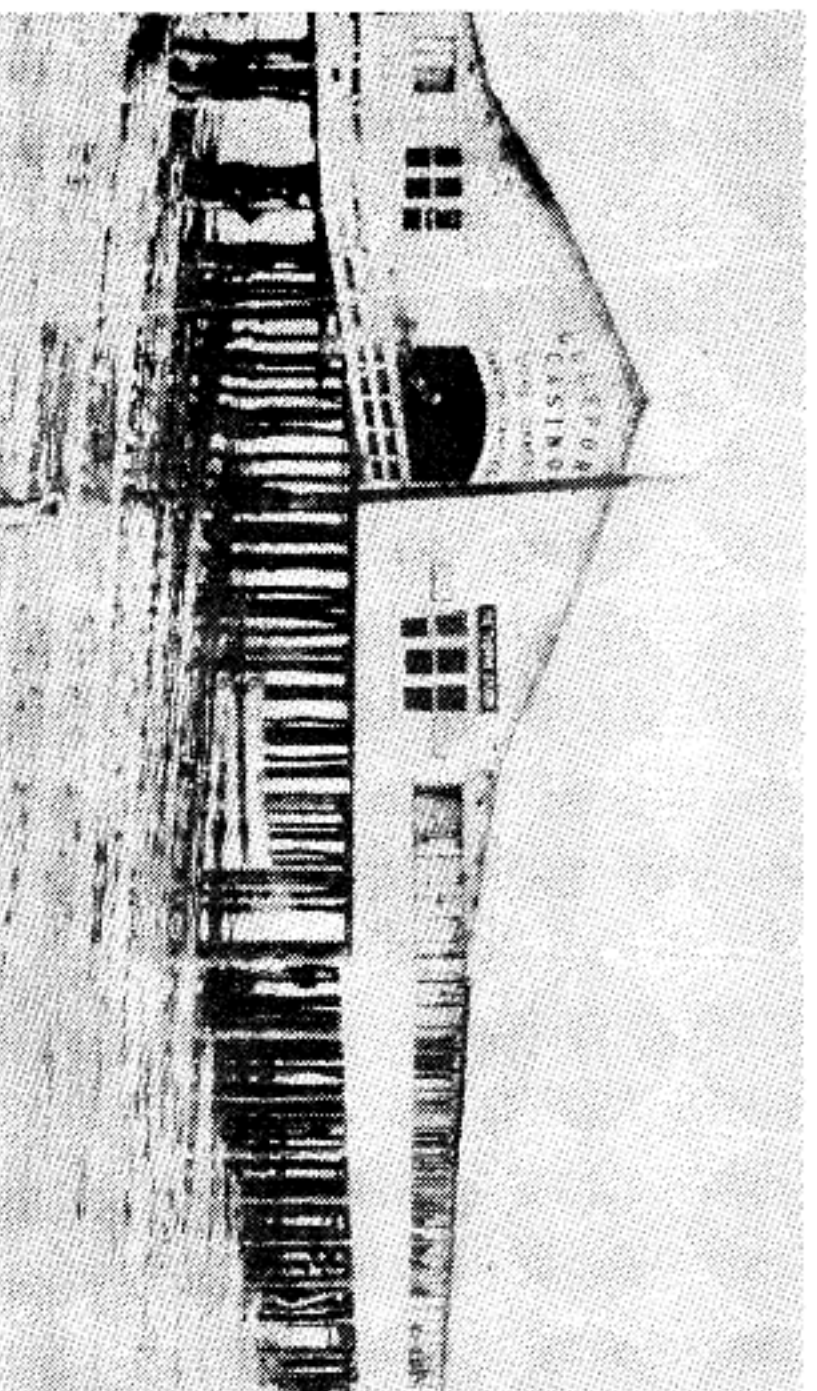
*Hotel Dobler — later became the Boca Ciega Inn*



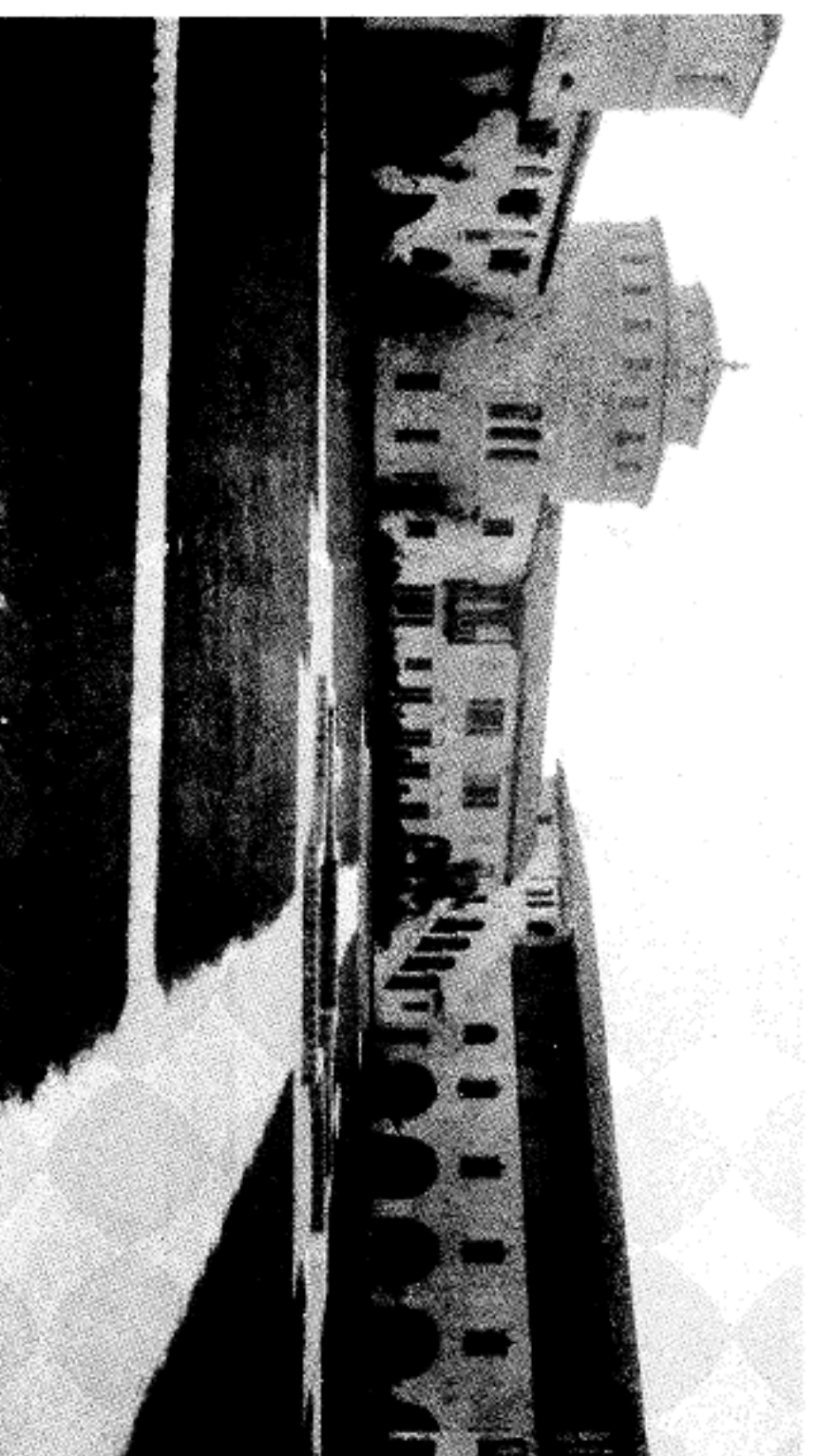
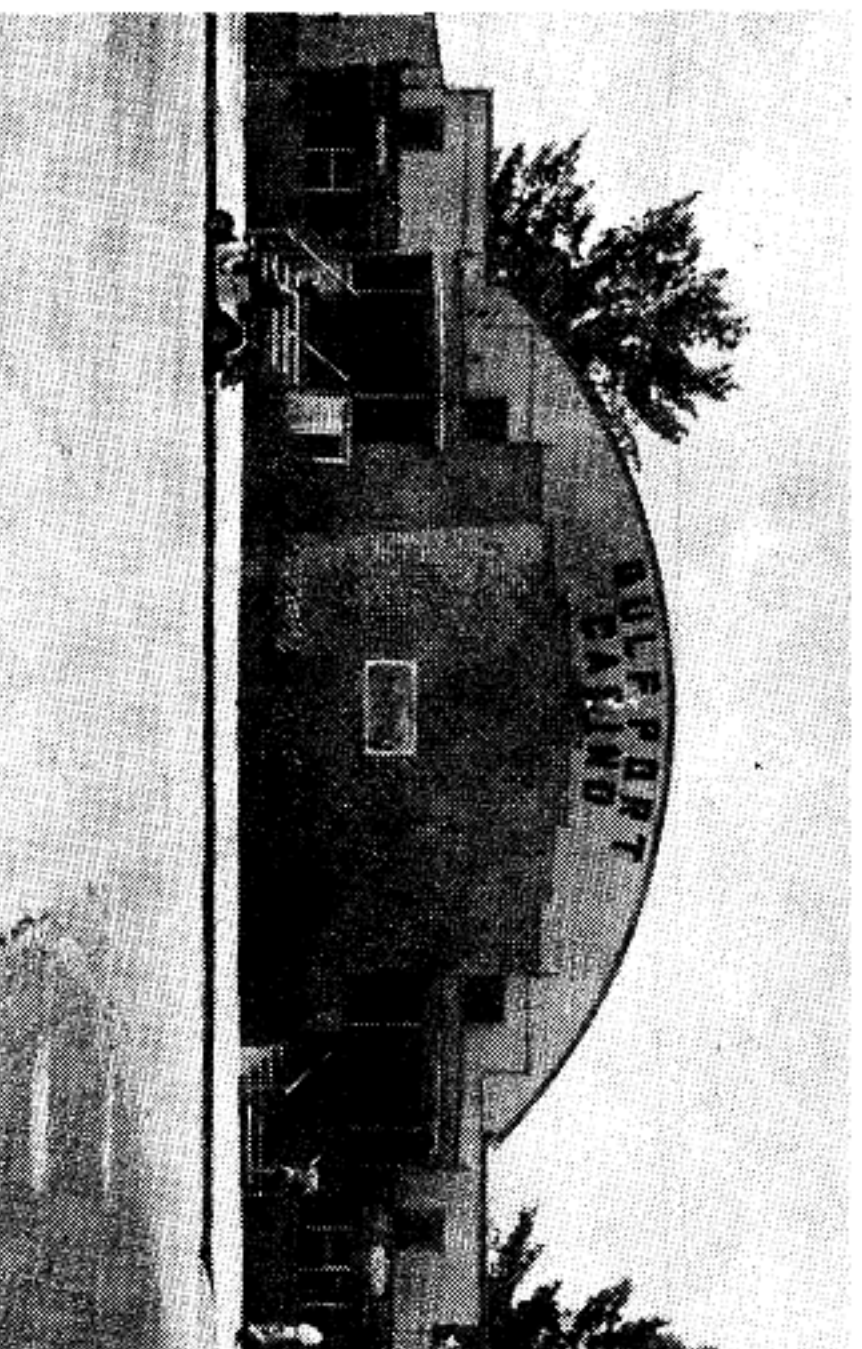
*Grocery store in about the 1914 era, on 30th and Beach Blvd. The building still stands and now operates as apartments.*



*The first Casino*

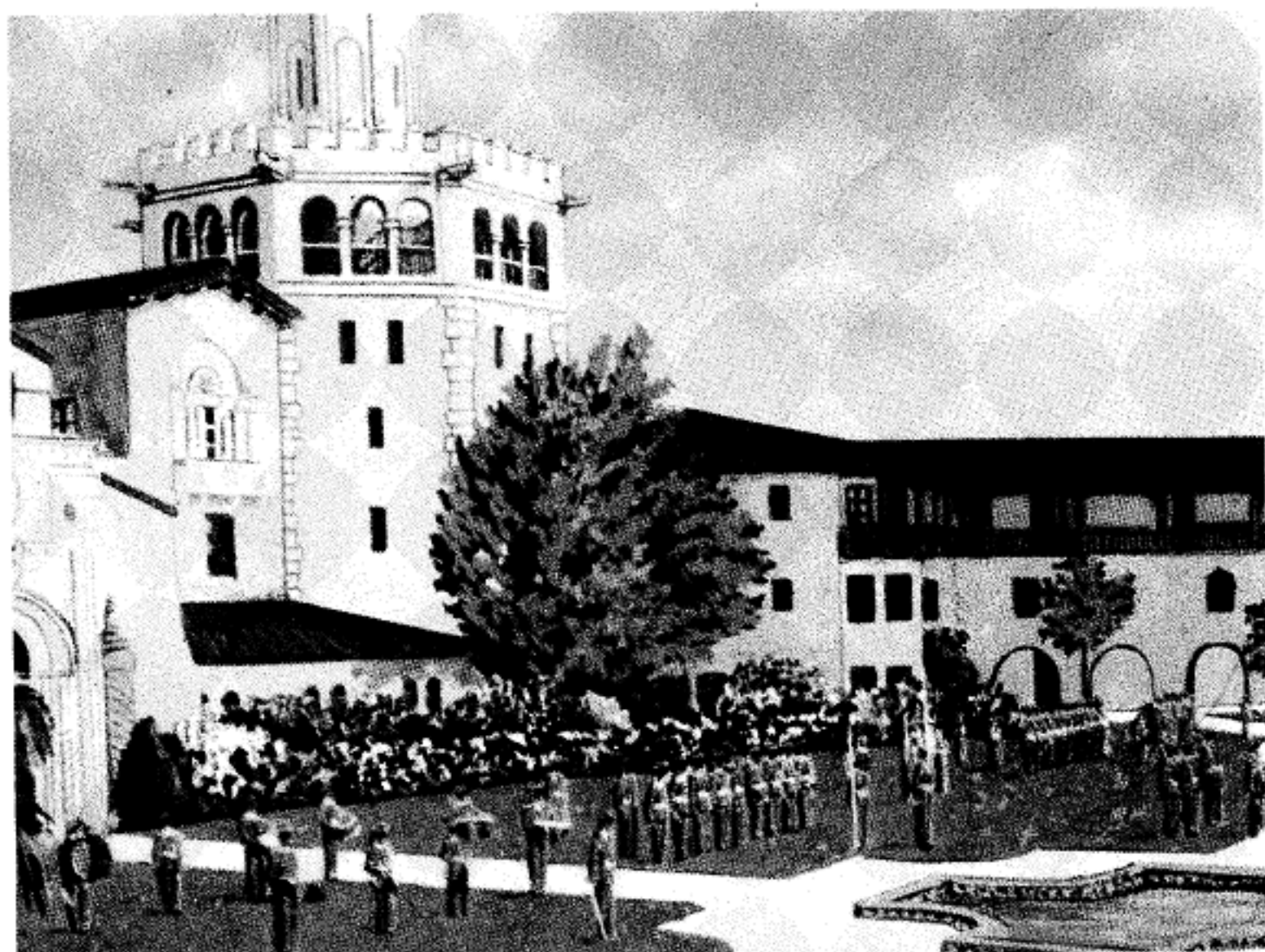


*Gulfport Casino in the early days.  
(left and below)*



*The Hotel Rolyat — photo taken 1927 or 1928.*





*The Florida Military Academy — in the Hotel Rolyat building.*



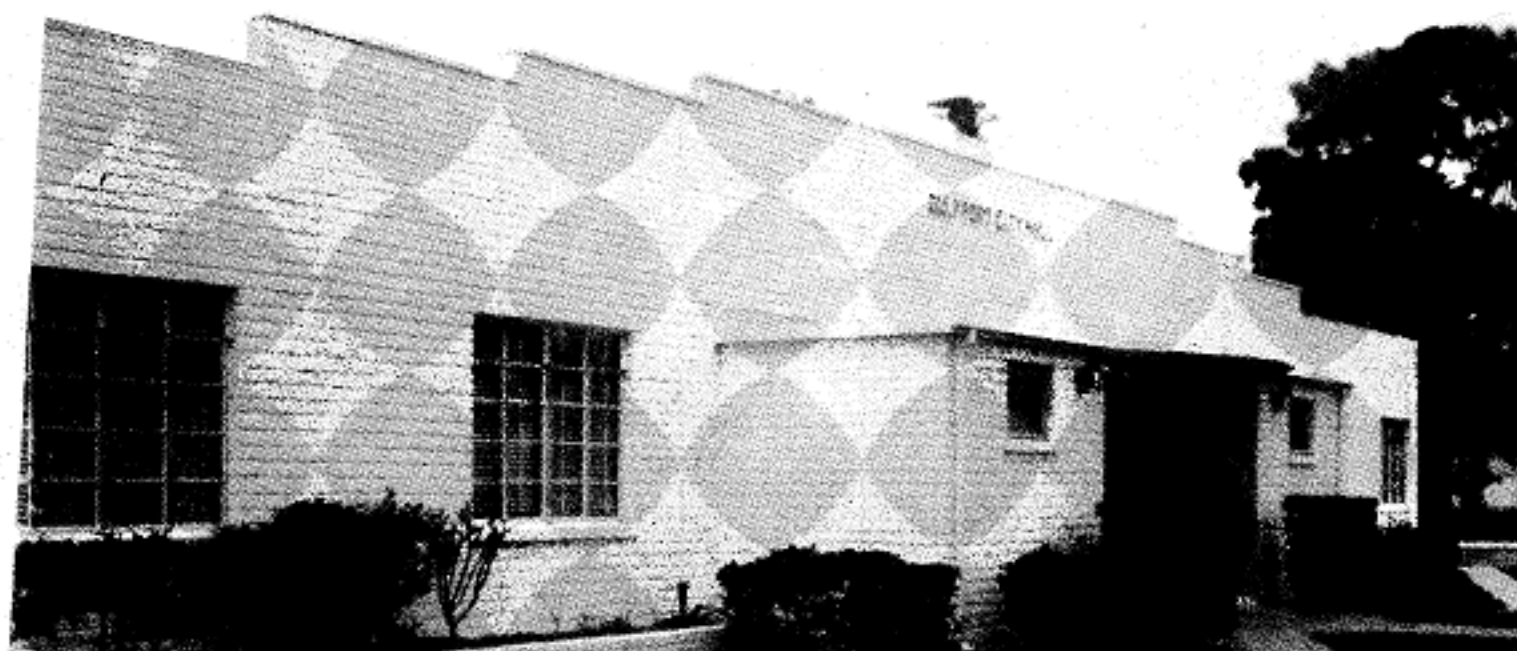
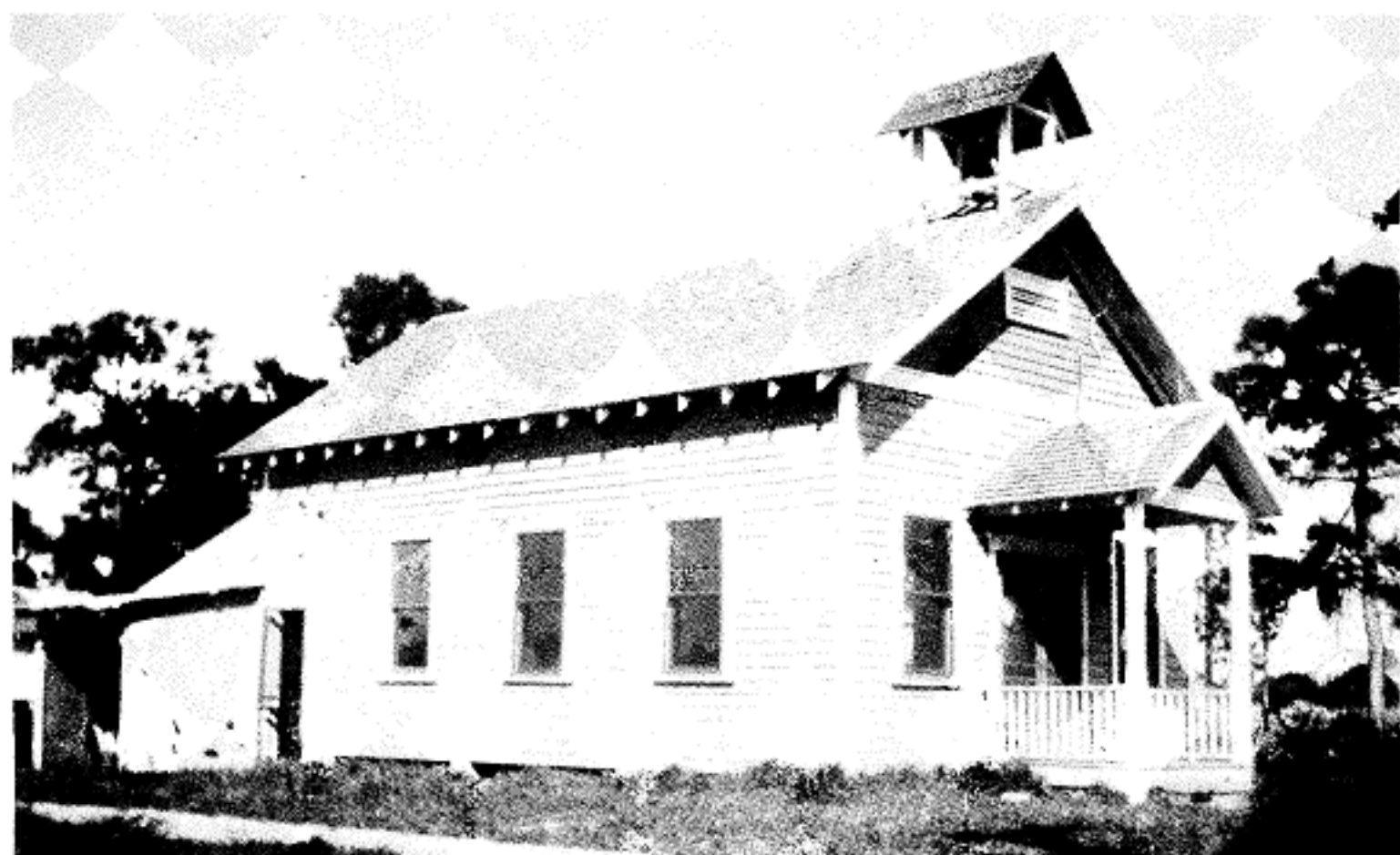
*Florida Nook — Miss Mary's Tea Room served delicious fish dinners and was located on the waterfront in the early 1900's.*





*Left — the first City Hall was located where present shuffle-board court is laid out. Later this was slightly remodeled.*

*Below — Building two was moved to present site on 53rd Street. Later a wing was added and used until present City Hall was built in 1953. Space has been added to this structure also.*





*Chandler house, around 1923. On Dellette, between the alley and 54th.*

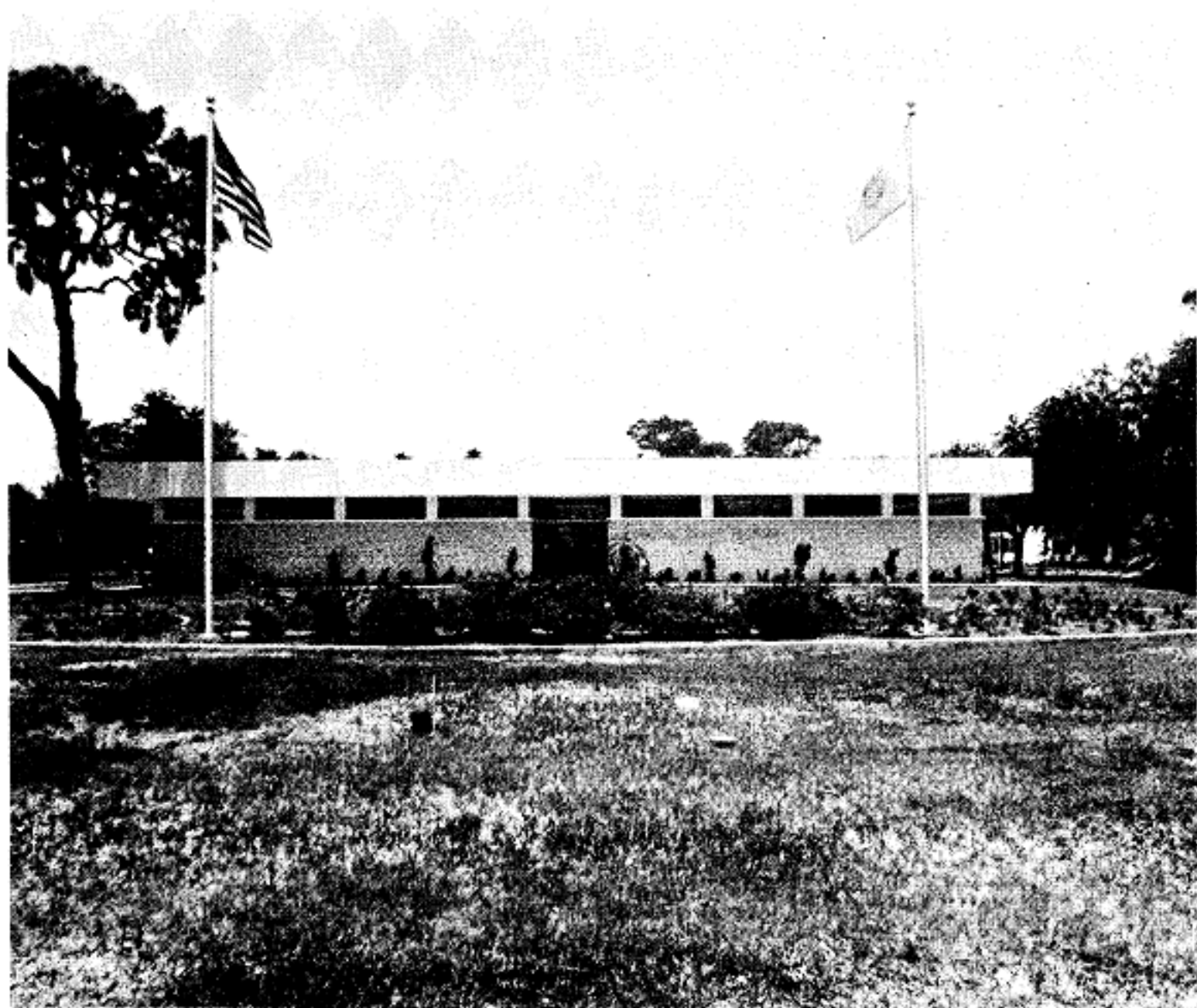
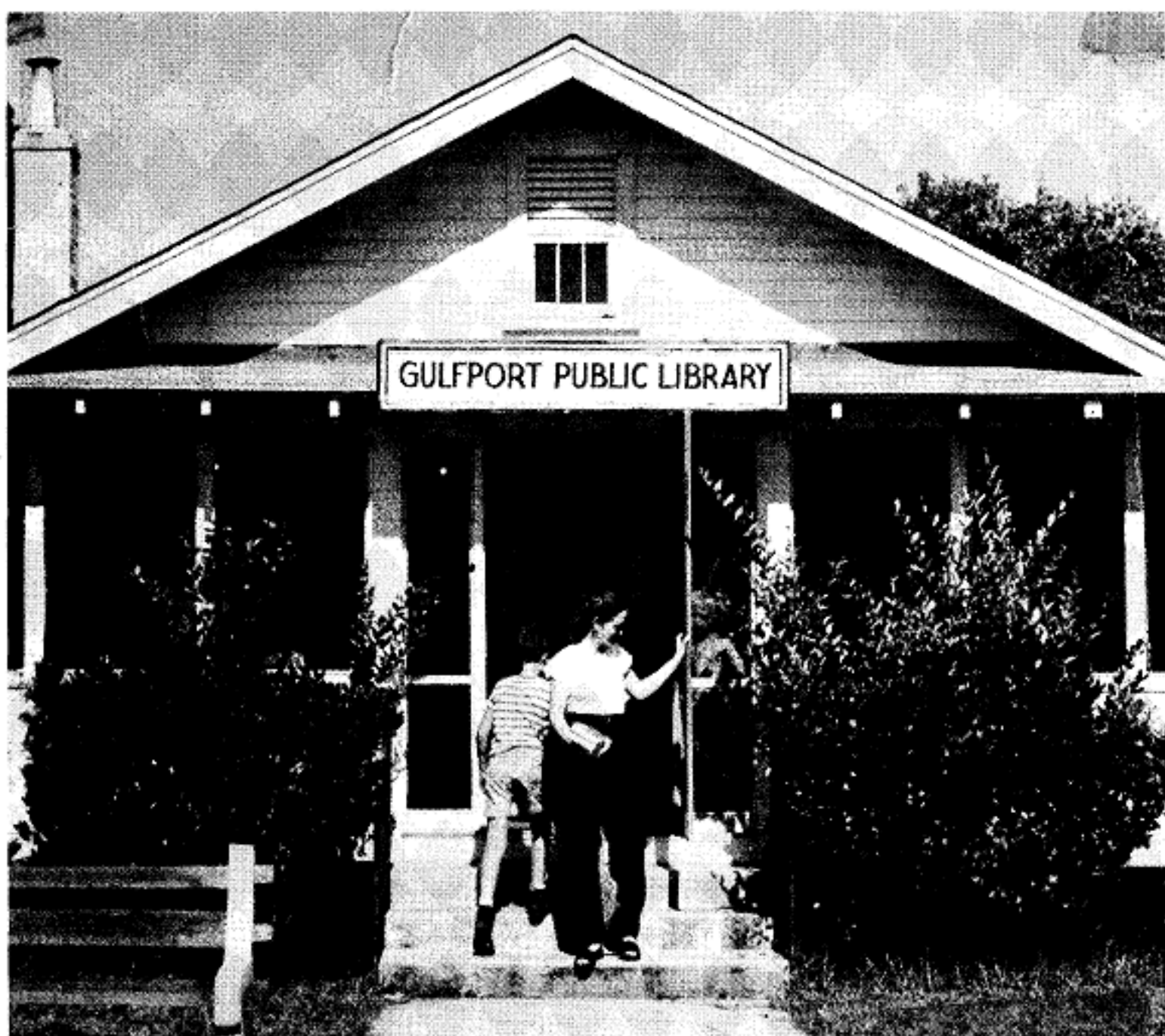


*The old Gulfport Pharmacy and Drug Store.*



*Bayview Terrace dinette in 1948. Owners were John and Edith (Haas) Barrett.*





*Gulfport Public Library — 1971*

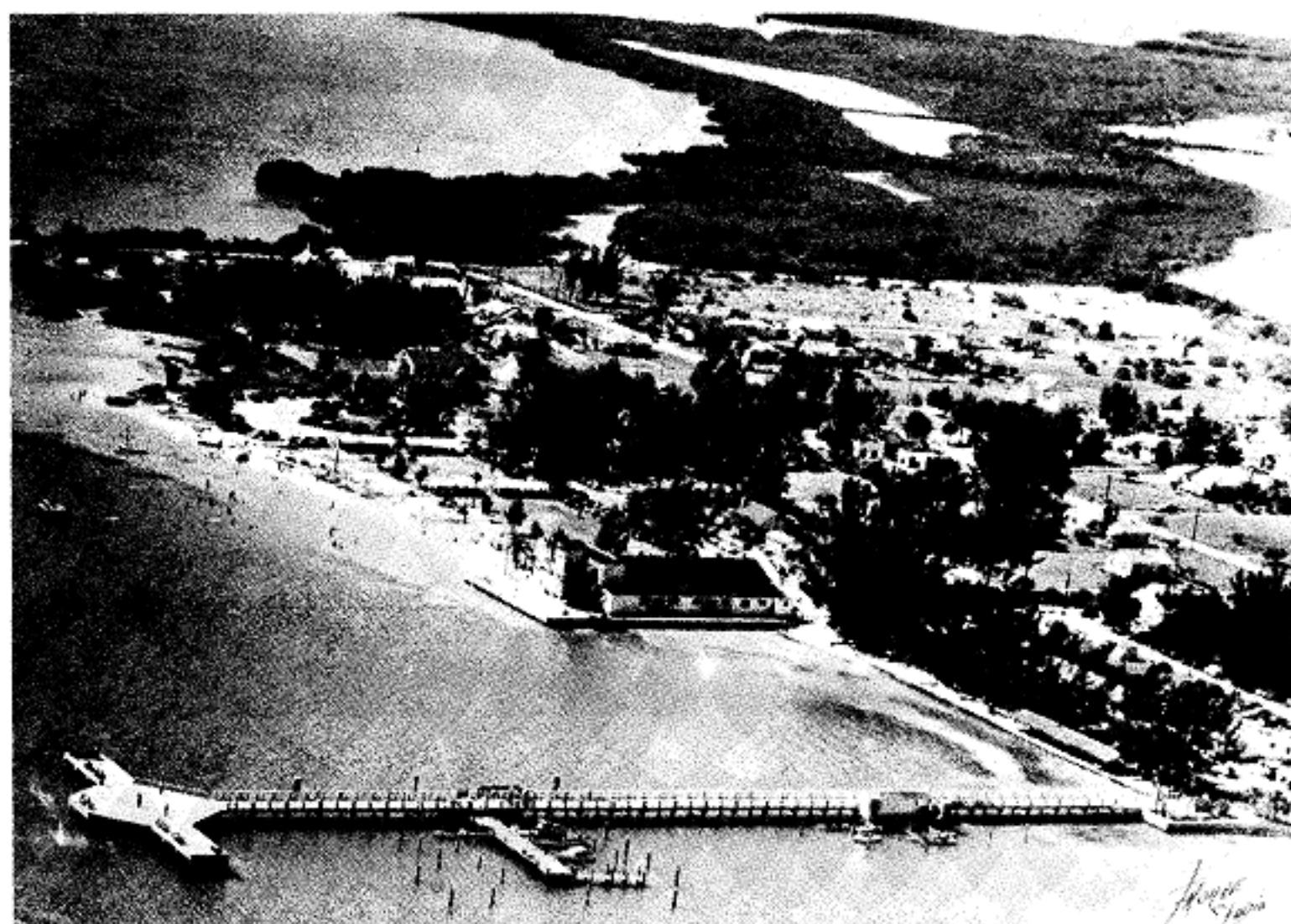




*Gulfport Community Center*



*Boca Ciega High School*



*Gulfport Beach and Pier, 1940's.*



*Gulfport War Mothers, May 1962 — Back row, left to right: Kathryn Thorne, Frances Weiland, Marcella Muschamp, Lillian Say, Cora Lawrence, Rose Sullivan. Front row, left to right: Ruth Gramly, Orpha Heystek, Elsie Loftus, Mildred Barker, Fannie Babcock, Marion Hitchins.*



# **What Makes Gulfport Unique?**



## CHAPTER 30

## A WASH DAY, '84

When a new manager took over our neighborhood laundromat, it became a friendly meeting place for all ages and nationalities. Many foreigners have moved into our area lately, and the laundromat serves as a gregarious melting pot. Recently I went there to wash a load of towels and was pleased to see how neat, clean, and cheerful the place was.

As I sorted out my towels on the long table, I saw an elderly man who looked very German eyeing my towels with apparent envy. His towels were dark brown and faded grays. In his halting English he asked me what made my towels look so bright. How could I tell him his browns and grays would never turn into pale pinks and soft greens? But I did show him a bottle of Clorox I was using and told him he could buy some in the grocery store next door.

He left and returned with a full gallon jug of Clorox and, with one quick motion, he started to empty the entire bottle into the machine with his towels. I yelled at him, "No! Oh, no!" — and grabbed his hand just in time. I tried to explain that a whole gallon of Clorox would quickly ruin his towels, *not* brighten them. I know he thought I was very rude, but he was nice enough to abide by my decision.

While our towels washed, I looked around the room. Up front I saw two old men having a heated argument over politics. The toothless man was shouting to the deaf man that "Ronald Reagan was nothing but a movie star; he's only trying to play President!" The man with the hearing aid had evidently lived in California at one time and was trying to out-shout the other man by citing Reagan's good record as Governor of California. I decided that debate would end in a tie, so I turned to watch their wives at work.

In contrast to the two men, they seemed quiet and gentle. With their long full skirts and heavy shoes they looked very "olde world." They were comparing crochet patterns, and the steel hooks in their hands moved in and out, over and under the threads so fast I was completely fascinated.

A thin, tired-looking young mother with two small children entered the laundromat. She had a huge amount of laundry to carry plus big boxes of soap and bleach. She carried a baby on a cradle-board and led a little girl by the hand. She propped up the baby in a chair, made a pad of towels on the floor for the little girl, and put her clothes to wash. Then she sat down on the floor beside the little girl

and divided a candy bar with her while she prepared to read the *National Enquirer*.

The German man folded his towels carefully after he had washed them, and I noticed the brown towels looked browner and the gray ones grayer. Also, some were full of polka dots from the bleach he had spilled. But he gave me a smile and a friendly nod as he left.

One of the women who had been crocheting lace, folded her laundry into a large wicker basket, put her hand on the arm of her toothless spouse, and said, "Kum, Papa." He turned and stalked out the door with his wife trailing along behind. I noticed *she* carried the heavy basket.

The wife of the other argumentative man said, "I told you not to get into political arguments with that man! When will you ever learn? Come on, let's get out of here!" I could hear her grumbling away at him long after they were out of sight. But I laughed as I remembered he had removed his hearing aid as soon as his sparring partner had left, so he couldn't hear a word she said!

The weary young mother finished her candy bar and took her large load of clothes to a battered old Ford car. She put the baby, still in his cradle-board, on top of the still-damp wash, put the little girl in a child's car seat, and drove away. I felt depressed as I thought of all she would have to do when she got home. She looked so tired.

As I folded my towels, I remembered how many traits of human nature — good and bad — will finally "all come out in the wash." So be it.

— Allean Davis

## CHAPTER 31

### COHESIVENESS OF THREE FAMILIES FOR FIVE GENERATIONS

George and Abigail Jarrell were the first members of the clan to visit Gulfport in the mid-1920's. They brought their grandson, R. W. "Bo" Caldwell, Jr., then nine, to visit in 1929. The Jarrells settled permanently in 1931 and opened a grocery store in the Holiday Inn building at 30th and Beach Blvd. Within a couple of years they moved north one block to the site of the current Gulfport Market. When the Jarrells opened their store, Gulfport had a population of about 850. Their daughter, Isabel Jarrell, helped run the store and taught kindergarten at Gulfport Elementary School.

It wasn't until 1935 that George Jarrell was able to talk his daughter, Gail, and her husband, R. W. "Bob" Caldwell, Sr., into moving down to Gulfport.

Edwin A. Markham moved here in 1934. He opened Markham Realty in 1935 and was joined the next year by R. W. Caldwell who operated the insurance business. In 1937, Caldwell went into business on his own; and Markham continued alone until 1935 when his son "Bud" took over. Bud remained in his business until his death in 1978, abruptly ending a busy civic life. He served on City Council from 1962 to 1968 and as Mayor from 1969 to 1971. His wife, Esther, took over the Markham business until she sold out to Hickman Realty in 1985.

R. W. Caldwell became the first President of the Gulfport Chamber of Commerce in 1939. He is largely responsible for the Gulfport shoreline as it is today from 54th to 58th Streets. He got a bid of \$3,000 to dredge up the beach and the City agreed to pay half if the private sector would raise the rest. Caldwell did raise \$1,500, but then the City refused to pay their half so he raised the balance and sand was dredged from east of 52nd Street because what was closer was not suitable. Caldwell started the *Gulfport Tribune* in 1940 and ran it for three or four years. He served on City Council from 1939 to 1943.

Caldwell's son "Bo" (later "Bob") graduated from St. Petersburg High in 1938, attended Junior College for a year, then went to MIT and earned his degree in Aeronautical Engineering in 1943. He designed airplanes on the West Coast but returned in 1951 to work with his father and open the building division of their firm. The next year, R.W. Sr. died suddenly, plunging the City into deep sadness, it is reported. He had just completed a term as President of the St. Petersburg Board of Realtors. Gulfport had grown to over 5,000 residents at that time. Lola Totten raised money to have a memorial fountain at the foot of 54th Street dedicated to Mr. Caldwell for his untiring efforts in creating the beach as we know it today. They say he created the term, "You can really live in Gulfport."

"Bob" Caldwell, Jr. became President of the Gulfport Chamber of Commerce in 1953, President of the Pinellas County Contractors and Builders Association and Vice President of the Friends of the Gulfport Public Library, Inc. He says one of his proudest accomplishments was overseeing the building of the Marie Bryan Library Building started in



1970. He was an original member of the first Pinellas Planning and Zoning Board. He has been involved in many development projects from Charlotte to Pasco Counties, but one that gave him extra satisfaction was the primary role he played in re-annexing Pasadena Golf Club Course and Pelican Bay back into Gulfport — land that Gulfport had lost 50 years earlier.

Bob and Adele Caldwell have three children, all of whom work in Gulfport. Daughter April Caldwell Hornsleth has run the real estate business with her husband, Poul, since 1974. Daughter Desi Caldwell McCarthy ran Gulfport's agrarium store for ten years and recently joined the family business. Son R. W. "Bill" Caldwell III is a builder like his Dad and is currently project manager for Pasadena Golf and Country Club for U.S. Steel.

There are four grandchildren to make a fifth generation, but April's daughter, Jody, born in 1980 in a planned home birth, was the first member of the clan born within our City limits — the great-granddaughter of George and Abigail Jarrell.

Quite a story, isn't it? It is included here as an example of how some families have clung together and helped develop our City into what it has become today, because strong people saw possibilities and built upon what others like them had seen, believed in, and built!

— *Poul Hornsleth, Jr.*

## CHAPTER 32

### DANIELS' CLOVER SPECIALTY COMPANY 4904 - 9th Avenue S.

Do you know that we have, perhaps, the only clover farm in the world right here in Gulfport? Let me tell you something about it, for it is truly unique and few know of its fascinating history and activity.

This clover enterprise started in the Canal Zone where Mr. Daniels was Chief Engineer for the telephone company. As sort of a hobby, he planted clovers along their lines and became known as a master floriculturist. He has a framed letter from the U.S. Department of Agriculture dated 5/29/30, signed by E. A. Hollowell, Senior Agronomist, verifying Mr. Daniels' four-leafed clover as *Trifolium ripnes L* white clover.

In 1944, the Daniels family moved to 3901 Burlington Avenue where they combined their home and industry; and

they moved to the present location in Gulfport in 1953.

Reviewing their scrapbooks is utterly exciting for they include newspaper clippings from many lands and most of our major cities, plus magazine articles: *National Geographic* (many), *Monsanto*, *Saturday Evening Post*, *American*, *Reader's Digest*, and many more. Dale Carnegie wrote about the "Luck Conscious Americans," and Dave Garroway had Mr. Daniels on his "Today" show. There are many hilarious cartoons and comic strips and Thank You's from VIPs honored with their gifts. I, too, was pleased with three calendars made for Germany and Austria showing their two separate "years," complete with translations, for me!

It is a rare privilege to be given any of their attention. One cannot expect them to use precious time from caring for the clovers to indulge in visiting with individuals, much as they might enjoy it. They gave me their precious time and a tour, explaining their processes, letting me browse through their memorabilia because they were glad to become part of our *History of Gulfport*.

Recently, the Daniels family moved to Dunellon where Mr. Daniels spends lots of time fishing. The new owners of the Clover Specialty Company are Mr. and Mrs. Safco — affectionately known as "Andy" and "Dandy." Mrs. Helen Whitney, employed at the company for nine years, helped them get started in this unusual industry.

Let this writer wish you luck in this poem the Daniels selected for our use. It is by an unknown poet, but is quoted quite often.

— Frances Purdy

### Four-Leaf Clover

*I know a place where the sun is gold  
And the cherry blossoms burst with snow,  
And down underneath is the loveliest nook  
Where the four-leaf clovers grow.*

*One leaf is for hope and one is for faith,  
And one is for love, you know;  
And God put another in for luck —  
If you search, you'll find where they grow.*

*But you must have hope and you must have faith,  
You must be strong — and so,  
If you work, if you wait, you will find the place  
Where the four-leaf clovers grow.*

## CHAPTER 33

## GULFPORT BEACH MUSICIANS

Our "Searcher for Facts," Helen Ross, asked Ernie Pappalardo to list the musicians who had played at our beach between 1964 (when the group was started by Charles Tripoli) and 1984 — and that list is: Charles Tripoli, Peter Gammi, Sam Martello, Al Pandolfo, Tony Cottone, Frank Genco, Roy Towne, Frank DiMagio, Salvatore Martorana, Victor Bove, Jack Landike, George Grizzuto, Jean Fontana, John DiMaria, Bob Myers, Frank Alexander, Tony Venditti, Sherley M. Cook, Ernie Pappalardo, Roger Myers, Frank Granese, Tom Murphy, Lu Moto, George Rounds, Gus Davis, Jerry Fische, George Gizzuto, Iggy Provezano, Larry Lloyd, Don Mills, Dick Roberts, Gus Anderson, Floyd and Leota Schmelzle, and James Lipari.

"Around 1967" a newspaper clipping showed a picture entitled "Band Picks Up a Crowd" and the text told of the popular group, mostly senior citizens, who presented a musical program running the gamut from opera to polkas, with plenty of old-time tunes thrown in for good measure. They listed George Hollwedel, Sam Martello, Sherley Cook, Eric Best, and Wally Pelton as players with Filomena DiGiattista in charge of the chorus and Vincent Carrogti as soloist.

In the May 10, 1984 *Gabber*, "Charlie Our Boy Honored" topped pictures of Charlie Tripoli being greeted by Bon Fellows of Channel 13 when his "gang" focused loving attention upon their leader of twenty years. Charlie had started this musical hallmark of our beach when he was only 76 years old, and he said he hadn't missed a day since. Sophie Remyer thought up the idea of giving him a plaque of appreciation, and Tom Mucci collected the money to pay for it.

More recently, our *Gabber* of 2/28/85 wrote of the musical background of the following, who play three times a week under the direction of Al Pandolfo. With him are Gus Anderson, Lloyd Moore, Larry Lloyd, Patricia Williams, Don "Red" Mills, Richard Moore, Peter Garini, Walter Pawluszyn, Floyd and Leota "Lee" Schmelzle, Sherley "Cookie" Cook, George Haug, Mario Fierro, Frank Fierro, Igor Razkazoff, Gene Piotrowski, and Bob Findley. The following week, an additional list was added by H. Ray Brunelle — including Patsy Clymer, a popular soloist on her piano melodian, Bernadine Piotrowski, singer, and Dick Roberts, Tom



Murphy, and Dr. Merlin A. Rogers.

It does seem quite appropriate to add this item to our features which are uniquely Gulfport characteristics!

— *Frances Purdy*

## CHAPTER 34

### GULFPORT'S GOLF STORY AT PASADENA YACHT AND COUNTRY CLUB

(Compiled from data provided by the Gulfport Public Library and by the Management of the Pasadena Yacht and Country Club, by John M. Davidson, Treasurer of the Friends of the Library and Handicap Director of the Club's Men's Association; and by Willard B. Simonds, Historical Society of Gulfport.)

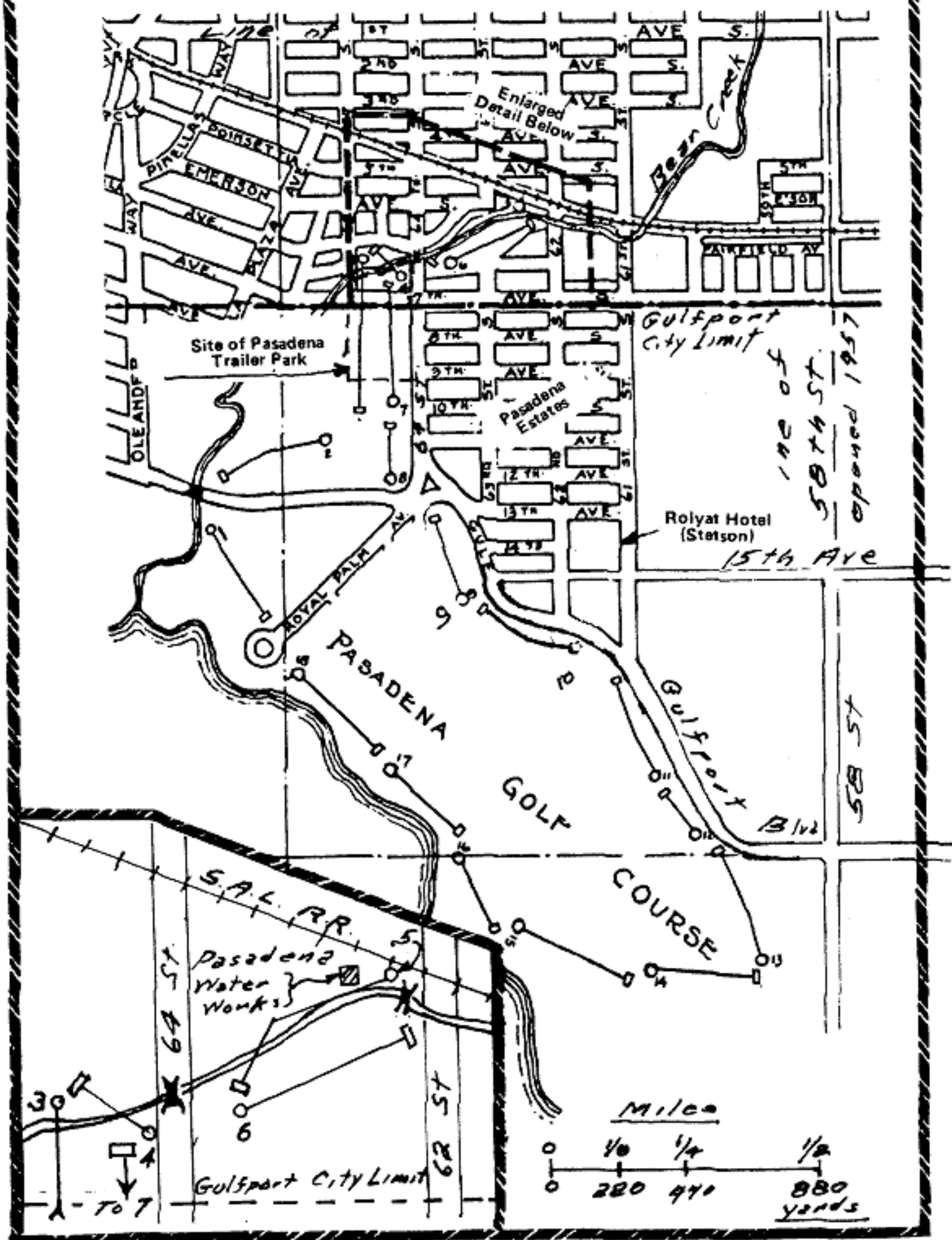
When annexation of Pasadena Yacht and Country Club Estates was realized, it returned to Gulfport an historical area relinquished to the County in the 1930's during the great Depression. This golf course comprises an important and impressive link between the past and the present history of American golf.

Mr. Jack Taylor built the Rolyat Hotel in the 1920's and developed part of the surrounding property as the Bear Creek Golf Course, designed and laid out by the golf architect, Van Kleet. He brought here well-known golf professionals Walter Hagen and Joe Kirkwood who popularized the course with their great abilities and their cavorting antics. In 1924 and 1925, Hagen received annual salaries of \$30,000 to act as President and Professional. Those were large sums but that was in boom times! Taylor was wealthy and Hagen was the most colorful and the best "Pro" of his time.

The course fell on hard times during the Depression and was allowed to grow into weeded pastures. Mr. Dixie Hollins offered to purchase the hotel and course but succeeded only in getting the latter which he reopened in 1930 as the Pasadena Golf Club. He retained many former members, most of whom were permanent hotel residents. Lloyd Gullickson became the "Pro," Scott Tupper the Greens Superintendent, and Albert Turner the Locker Room Attendant who stayed 35 years. Gullickson, whose influence on Pasadena's history makes him its greatest name, eliminated holes on the north side of Gulfport Blvd. along 64th Street and built new ones south of the Boulevard, thus starting changes in the layout that are ongoing.

# PASADENA GOLF COURSE Original Bear Creek Layout

BASE: National Litho Co., St. Petersburg Area Map, © 1930.  
ADDITIONAL MATERIAL AND REWORK: W. B. Simonds, April 1985



To accomplish U.S. Steel's (present owner) plans for housing, new clubhouse and marina, there is a brand new 15th hole designed by Arnold Palmer and recently dedicated by lovable Chi Chi Rodriguez, one of Pro Golf's most popular and capable performers. Upon completion of the new clubhouse, this new hole will become the 18th, with all other holes renumbered.

One of Lloyd's first promotions was the 1932 City of St. Petersburg Women's Championship, won by Frances Hatfield, one of his protégées. His most brilliant promotion was between partners Babe Didrikson (later Zaharias), the ruling ladies' Pro champion, and Baseball's immortal, Babe Ruth, opposing Lloyd within that year's national amateur ladies' champion, Glenna Collett Vare. The two Babes regaled the audience with booming drives and long woods, plus wisecracks and tomfoolery, but in the end the calm and steady play of Lloyd and Glenna prevailed. That match is part of golf history and raised more than \$600 for the St. Petersburg Crippled Children's Hospital. In 1933, Bob Shane came to Pasadena to help Lloyd, and together they produced three amateur champions — Ralph Redman in the 1935 Southern Men's, Horace Williams in the 1936 Florida State, and Helen McGarry in the 1937 Southern Women's. In 1937, Lloyd himself won the Florida State Seniors.

World War II, and war efforts in 1941 completely curbed all course and club activities. The former was fenced in and a herd of beef cattle grazed on the beautiful fairways, tees, and greens. At first, the clubhouse was used as a non-com officers' club, but later, as a U.S. Air Corps commissioned officers' club.

At the close of hostilities, down came the fences, away went the herd of cattle, and out came the golf balls and players! The course was leased to St. Petersburg but remained under the watchful eye of Lloyd Gullickson.

Over at the Don CeSar Hotel on St. Petersburg Beach was a then-unknown young recreation director who believed golf was a great source of rehabilitation for his Veterans in that center. He was Arnold Palmer, who brought many vans and bus-loads of "Vets" to Pasadena for lots of golf therapy. The lease ran out in 1954, and for the next fifteen years, Mr. Hollins leased Pasadena to Premier Development Corporation and Boswell Construction Company. The president of those two companies was Mr. Marion L. Boswell, better known as "Bo," a still active and much-loved Pasadena golfer. He has



provided money for construction of a swimming pool (since replaced by rose gardens), for renovation of the clubhouse and bar, and for extensive changes on the course. The remarkable growth of this course and club began with this period.

Big League baseball and golf have been closely associated at Pasadena over the years. The Major League Baseball Players' Championship is held annually during Spring Training season. We hosted fourteen of twenty-five St. Petersburg Open events, a former fixture on the Men's Tour. Arnold Palmer won in 1958, and other winners include Paul Runyan, Johnney Revolta, Ben Hogan, Lawson Little, George Bayer, and Gary Player. Winners of the event at other area courses include Willie MacFarlane, Sam Snead, Jimmy Demaret, Peter Cooper, Jack Burke Jr., and Cary Middlecoff. Talk about the legends of golf! We made them here!

No history of Pasadena Yacht and Country Club would be complete without noting our most prestigious S. & H. Classic, one of the oldest "Pro" tour events and *the* oldest of the LPGA ladies' tour. Held on several area courses over the years and formerly known as the Orange Blossom Classic, our course has become its home. Sponsored by a dedicated group of area business and professional men (the Polywogs) and joyfully helped by volunteer marshalls and other workers, the S. & H. raised many thousands of dollars for local charities and attracts the greatest names in ladies' pro golf. The Classic is held in April when the course is most beautiful — flowers and shrubs are in full bloom, greens are immaculate, and surely, at that time it is a show of golf at its finest.

Boca Ciega High School graduate, Murle MacKensie Breer, was prominent in the Ladies' LPGA Tour for many years. Pasadena's Cynthia "Cindy" Hill, former amateur champion, now represents the club on tour, and she, too, is an outstanding player.

This U.S. Steel operation is managed by Elenore Champion, a dedicated executive who has worked with three owners of the club. William "Bucky" Thornbury is the Head Pro who has spent nineteen of his thirty-eight years here and who is considered to be one of the best teachers of the game. Linda Groover is Ladies' "Pro" whom they believe is a devoted professional in the teaching area. "Bud" Quandt is Head Greenskeeper, ranked as "tops" nationally. Last, but by no means least, is Chef Charlie Saad who operates one of the most attractive restaurants [open] on the Suncoast; he is

assisted by a bevy of attractive hostesses, waitresses, and barmaids.

No map the size of ours could possibly show the true nature of the landscape south of Gulfport Blvd. in the 1925-1930 period. The Boulevard then crossed 64th Street at 13th Avenue, about two blocks north of the present crossing, and the whole area south of it was interlaced with tidal inlets, streams, and some small, shallow lakes. Within this watery landscape were several small islands. Jack Taylor, as part of his program to entertain the hotel guests, populated one of those islands with a troop of monkeys. Their antics did provide hours of entertainment for the hotel guests, the golfers, and the local residents alike. "Monkey Island" came to enjoy a brief fame as a popular tourist attraction.

When the Florida Boom busted in 1926, Taylor went bankrupt and left town overnight, leaving no one to care for the monkeys (or for the many colorful birds he had in an aviary on Central Avenue). Walter Fuller rescued the birds, giving them to friends who would care for them. The monkeys were turned loose, and most migrated to the Jungle area where they lived on for years making general nuisances of themselves.

In spite of all the filling and development in the intervening fifty-five years, the location of Monkey Island is still visible in the open space east of 64th Street and south of 13th Avenue. The clump of six or eight trees close to 64th Street marks that location.

The watery nature of the landscape also made for a difficult golf course. Mr. Maurice Hollins, once president of the Pasadena Golf Club, in a letter to the Pasadena Men's Association, said, in part:

"All of the holes were extremely long with many traps, creeks, and lakes built into the layout. There were 13 water holes out of the total of 18. . . . As the original layout was too difficult for the average golfer, Lloyd [Gullickson] made recommendations for a new design for some of the holes. All of the holes going north and returning along 64th Street were abandoned and new ones constructed within the boundaries of the other property."

— *John M. Davidson, Willard B. Simonds*

**CHAPTER 35****HISTORY OF BOY SCOUTING AND  
GIRL SCOUTING IN GULFPORT**

*"Where there is no vision, the people perish!"*

Even before the great biblical prophets thundered their urgent messages pleading with the populace to follow in the paths of wisdom, a still more ancient philosopher tried to alert the citizens of the world's first great democracy: "People of Athens: Why do you labor and struggle to achieve greatness and plenty, all the while neglecting your children, to whom you must soon leave everything you have?"

The City of Gulfport and its citizens, however, have been clear-sighted and have long recognized the value of health- and character-building activities for its youngsters on whom the City itself must soon depend.

Among the most far-reaching and constructive youth work over the years is the support which Gulfport has given its young people through the Scouting program, both Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts. Nearly all of us are familiar with the neat, khaki-uniformed boys, ages ten to eighteen, as they do their daily "good turns," including helping and teaching their well-scrubbed younger Cub Scout brothers in their handsome navy blue and gold uniforms. And who has not been charmed by a diminutive Brownie, often appearing tiny for her only seven or eight years, knocking at your door with a bright Girl Scout calendar, following in the footsteps of her big sister in her green dress, or green slacks, and white blouse, selling the famous and delicious Girl Scout cookies?

Both Boy Scout and Girl Scout troops have existed in Gulfport for about 50 years, the first Boy Scout Troop (#15) being organized in 1933 by Mr. Jerome Girard. The first Girl Scout Troop in our City reportedly started probably in the late 1940s; detailed specific records, however, seem to exist only since about 1958.

Their meeting place, Scout Hall of Gulfport, has been well known over the years. "Old Scout Hall" was originally the building which housed the First United Methodist Church of Gulfport, on the northeast corner of 28th Avenue S. and 53rd Street. When the new church building was erected, Mr. Archie Tabor arranged to have the old building moved across 53rd Street to the northwest corner (about 1956-57) and thus it became known as "Scout Hall." A stone marker commemorates Mr. Tabor near the flagpole of this building today.



An enchanting glimpse into this far-distant past was supplied by Mrs. Ida Smith ("Smitty"), a long-time pioneer Girl Scout Leader in St. Petersburg: "Smitty" tells that she used to regularly bring 35 or 40 Girl Scouts from all over St. Petersburg out to Gulfport on the trolley in order to join local girls in a Scout day-camp in the pleasant "country" surroundings of Scout Hall! Gulfport citizens who were here in the '50s or earlier will recall those street-car tracks running down 55th Street to the Casino.

In 1966, when Gulfport completed its new Community Building at the end of 58th Street S. on the waterfront, the old Gulfport Community Hall (located between Old Scout Hall and the Gulfport Shuffleboard Court) became available. After some negotiation (led by Les McEwen), the City agreed to let the old community building become New Scout Hall; and the Old Scout Hall thus was made available for Red Cross courses, sewing activities, etc. (Still later, Old Scout Hall was used by the GEMS as a nerve center for dispatching transportation for senior citizens; and in 1983 it became the home of the newly-organized Gulfport Historical Society.)

The New Scout Hall, officially known as "Scout Hall of Gulfport," has made a sturdy meeting place for active Scouts. In addition to the generous outdoor space which provides freedom for active games and free running and play, its rustic interior is spacious and inviting. Its beloved knotty cypress paneling (traditionally reputed to be impervious to termites) provides a welcome hint of the outdoors for every meeting.

Gulfport Scout troops utilize Scout Hall nearly every weekday afternoon and evening. Their activities here are coordinated by an informal government embodied in the Scout Hall Committee, which consists of one representative from each troop using the hall as well as other interested adults from the community. The officers of this committee provide necessary continuity as well as help and guidance for new leaders. Ongoing training is provided by Scout area councils.

All Scouting adults, for both boys and girls, consistently have taken special training in order to provide as professional leadership as possible.

The first Boy Scout troop in Gulfport was organized in 1933 by Mr. Jerome Girard (who, in 1985, at age 83, now lives in Kenneth City in northwest St. Petersburg). In 1933 Mr. Girard was working for the City of Gulfport as Town Foreman in charge of maintenance, when Major Wetmore, a Gulfport Councilman, asked him to become a Scout Master

and organize a troop. Recognizing a responsibility to their developing children, the City gave Mr. Girard time off from his work duties, as well as some financial support, for the new troop.

When Mr. Girard asked for help in finding a meeting place, the Gulfport Fire Department made its own building available on Tuesday evenings. This meeting place was, of course, the *old* building, south of City Hall, not the more recently-built Fire Department building.

Later, the Gulfport Methodist Church permitted the Scouts to meet on a bench on their church grounds, and finally made their church building itself available as Scout Hall.

When Troop 15 took its first camping trip in the summer of 1934, six of Mr. Girard's seven Scouts were present. The troop grew rapidly and in the next camping trip there were at least fourteen Scouts.

By 1937, all Troop 15 Scouts were in uniform, wearing the wide-brimmed stiff khaki hats which early Scouters well remember. Money for uniforms and for troop activities was earned by collecting newspaper and tin cans for salvage.

Friends gave or loaned the boys tents for weekend camping expeditions among the majestic oaks of the Seminole area — then a jungle wilderness; and in the summers the boys went for two weeks of outdoor life at newly-organized Camp Soule at Safety Harbor. Here there were cabins sleeping eighteen boys, dormitory-type predecessors of the present much smaller three-sided Adirondacks.

The Scouts were weighed before and after Summer Camp, and each boy was expected to gain five pounds while there! These were Depression days, of course; and Mr. Girard recalls that on one occasion they ran out of food, so he reluctantly had to tell the boys they would all have to go home — unless they could somehow locate some food. The boys quickly fanned out and returned within a few hours each with a load of provisions — Nathan White had caught twenty-two mullet; three or four boys each had secured the donation of a chicken; and watermelons and other goodies abounded — enough to fill out the camp session!

Thoughtful aspects of life were not neglected: religious services were observed weekly, and one boy even walked the six miles into Clearwater in order to attend a church of his own faith.

Boys less fortunate than the Scouts were not bypassed.

Upon the urgent pleading of a parent, even a seriously handicapped boy just out of hospital attended camp one summer, sometimes coming to the Scout Master in the middle of the night for his emergency "shot" for asthma. Scouting has always made every humanly-possible effort to adapt requirements to the needs of individual young people.

Mr. Girard has many stories to tell of those early Boy Scout camping days, including spectacular campfire stunts such as "Bringing Fire Down from Heaven" — a feat accomplished by sliding a torch down from a very tall pine tree along a previously secretly-suspended string!

Occasionally, then as now, activities and stunts tended to get out of hand, rushing enthusiastically but heedlessly ahead on their own momentum into uncharted areas. Mr. Girard describes one rainy day at camp when the boys took turns flipping the pancakes baking in a frying pan. One boy was accidentally touched by the hot pancake-turner and yelled that he was "branded." Not to be outdone, the other boys immediately decided to brand themselves on their chests, spelling out the troop official number, 15, by means of the hot pancake-turner. Carried along by the contagious excitement and youthful exuberance, Mr. Girard looked on benevolently, only to realize later, to his chagrin and dismay — when a parent protested vigorously — that some of these playful brands were indeed of the permanent variety and not merely the innocent charcoal and soot smudges that he had assumed them to be!

And, along with horseplay and good fun, then as today, useful skills were learned and practiced. Mr. Girard describes an early Scout Jamboree at Al Lang Field in downtown St. Petersburg where Scouts from the entire surrounding area demonstrated the use of camp equipment such as lanterns and handpumps. Gulfport's Troop 15 proudly set a pattern which later members of the troop have attempted to maintain over the years. Troop 15 was rated outstanding in the main area of competition: (1) Erecting a tent - 5-minute limit for putting up four sides and roof; (2) Chopping wood; (3) Making fires; (4) Boiling water; and (5) Tying knots.

As Mr. Girard recalls, almost all of his Scouts went into military service during World War II; and he states with pride that because of the training in outdoor and survival skills he had received in Gulfport, every Scout from Troop 15 was promoted almost immediately upon entering the armed forces. Reportedly, Nathan White was promoted to Signal-



man on his first day in service! No Gulfport Scout died in service, and many felt that it was at least in part their Scout basic training which helped them to survive.

Throughout all Scouting activities, ideals of personal integrity and honor are inculcated by both precept and example. Mr. Girard's justified pride in his Scouts was obvious as he recalled an incident in which a boy once was questioned by the authorities about his part in a Halloween prank in which heavy objects had been thrown in front of a street car in Gulfport. When the court invited Mr. Girard to question his troop member, the Scout readily admitted his guilt, explaining to the court, "I just couldn't lie to *him*." For these young people, personal integrity thus became a way of life: "*A Scout's honor is to be trusted.*"

In 1942, Mr. Girard went to work for Florida Power Company; and since his work there involved repeated shifts of working hours, he had to give up leadership of the Scout troop. By then most of his boys had gone into military service. The troop was not active again until Nathan White restarted it in 1945, chartering it as Troop 315.

Scouting has always been a community affair as well as a family activity; and an impressive number of individuals and organizations have been involved over the years in enriching the program of Scouting offered to Gulfport youngsters. One who assisted Mr. Girard in the early days was Mr. Charles M. Phillips, at that time Principal of Disston Junior High School. (Mr. Phillips was the father of Judge Charles Phillips, the well-known Pinellas County Judge in recent years). Mr. Charles Phillips was interested in Boy Scouting, even helping to organize the troop. In 1946 he was instrumental in helping Nathan White get the first troop charter.

As early as 1939, however, Mr. Phillips was helping Mr. Girard at weekly meetings, signing on for Leadership training and sharing with the Scouts his knowledge as a naturalist. At one time he grew seven kinds of citrus on a single tree! He worked for merit badges right along with the boys, and at Christmas spent a week camping in the woods with them. He also supplied disciplinary know-how, an essential for the ever-growing group of extremely active young men. Far from resenting his strictness, the boys responded with respect and affection. When Mr. Phillips' mother died, twenty Scouts from Troop 15 attended her funeral in Clearwater, all in full Scout uniform.

Many boys and young men have continued to enjoy and

profit from Boy Scout activities over the years under the capable leadership of a succession of other friendly, competent men with a knack for constructive human relationships. To name a few: Nathan White (one of Mr. Girard's early Scouts), Edgar Miller (Woodsman *extraordinaire* with a knack for relating to growing boys), Dick Baumann (charismatic and adventuresome leader of boys over the historic King trail from Tampa to Dade City), Les McEwen (with a passion for patrol organization), and Carl Brown (soft-spoken but effective leader). These, among others, served as Scout Masters. Many other Gulfport men participated in troop activities and/or furnished major committee support, among them H. B. Blewett, Sam McCollum, Tom Hucknall, Walter Brooks, Arthur Burton, Lou Barrows, Bob Reese. The list could go on and on . . . .

Although the Girl Scouts were organized later than the Boy Scouts in Gulfport, several troops have been active each year since at least the early '50s, and possibly as early as the mid-1940s. Little specific information regarding Gulfport Girl Scouts before about 1955 can be located. Mary Atkinson and Dorothy Taylor were among the early leaders from 1958 on; both recall that earlier troops were organized and meeting, but details of leadership, etc. have not yet been located. Mary Atkinson and Dorothy Taylor are still active in Scouting in 1985, as is Emily Rautman (who started as a Brownie Leader in 1966 and is currently Troop Committee Chairman of Boy Scout Troop 315 after six years as Girl Scout Neighborhood Chairman).

Over the years there have usually been Brownie Girl Scout troops, Intermediate troops, Cadette troops, and sometimes a Senior Girl Scout troop meeting in Scout Hall of Gulfport. Sometimes as many as eight or nine troops were operating during the same year.

Many Gulfport women have devoted much time and energy to leading these troops so that girls could have the advantages of the Scouting program. Many of those who worked early and long in Girl Scouting still live in Gulfport and are still active in various community affairs. Any list of these dedicated women leaders would have to include Bernice Dopico Perry, Roberta Miller, Jane Boughamer, Genevieve Smith, Reba Greene, Virginia Welch, Mollie Smeaton, Lillian Holloway, Phyllis Maudsley, Deanie Mowbray, Rhona Sasher, Ernestine O'Connell, Judy Reyerson and, in addition, there are unknown (and largely unsung) heroines who supplied

vital help but who worked mainly behind the scenes, such as Rosemary Gable and Arlene Samuel.

Little girls of Brownie age (seven and eight years) were taught essential camping skills such as fire-building, sometimes by their advanced brothers in Ed Miller's Boy Scout troop. On special exhibition days at Scout Hall, proud parents watched as girls competed to see which patrol excelled in Scouting skills such as seeing which patrol of Intermediate Scouts could put up its tents the quickest (without sagging) — sometimes in the corner of the block where Gulfport's tennis courts now stand. Older Girl Scouts who perfected their survival skills went primitive camping in Seminole woods on weekends and later to the "established camps" — Camp Dorothy Thomas (east of Brandon), Scout-Crest (east of Tarpon Springs), and still later, Wai Lanai (near Dunedin). The "tree houses" available at one camp (Withlacoochee) were a popular favorite.

Most of the Girl Scout Leaders were mothers who learned camping and other skills just one step ahead of their daughters! Some stayed with a troop only a year or two; others spent the entire period of their daughter's girlhood, from eight to eighteen years, helping with Scouting activities. More than one mother, if she was so fortunate as to have both a son and a daughter, took up time-juggling, boldly adding to her already busy schedule the demanding and strenuous jobs of being both a Cub Scout Den Mother and a Girl Scout Leader.

And in the case of both Boy Scout and Girl Scout troops, many Gulfport adults who have no children at all or whose children are grown and gone, have over the years been actively working to maintain and help with the Scouting programs.

Thus, over a period of more than half a century, many Gulfport organizations and also many individuals have helped enrich the local Scouting program. In 1960, for example, the Gulfport Garden Club planted a Florida orchid tree to beautify the grounds of the building given to the Scouts by Gulfport Methodist Church. The outdoor fireplaces around which so many Scouts with their Leaders and parents have enjoyed warmth, food, and comradeship, were constructed with the help of the Gulfport Social Service Council, the Lions Club, and the Mert Barrs. The City of Gulfport itself has made many, many improvements to both the old and the new Scout Hall, helping the Scouts keep the facilities and



building in good repair. The Naval Reserves took on a special project of assistance with sorely-needed structural and electrical repairs, and many private individuals have donated untold hours of labor (yes, "blood, sweat, and tears") in carpentry, scraping, painting, sewing, cleaning, etc. Others have donated useful equipment or supplies such as an electric stove and refrigerator. The Lions Club has long been official sponsor of both Cub Pack and Boy Scout Troop 315, supplying both financial and various other assistance as needed. The American Legion, too, has assisted, at one time providing meeting space for an Explorer Troop for older teenage boys; they have also cheerfully supplied flags as needed for any troop. The Gulfport *Gabber* has been generous with publicity and has been invaluable in spreading the word that all children are welcome to join the Scouts. The various women's auxiliaries, the Gulfport Coterie, the individual City officials and Council persons, and many stores and businesses have offered friendly hands. What would a Boy Scout Charter Night or a Girl Scout International Day Buffet be without the "Bug Juice" (orange juice) donated by MacDonalds? (Don't forget the napkins, salt and pepper, etc.) Truly, Scouting has been a *community* project in Gulfport.

In return, both the Boy Scouts and the Girl Scouts of Gulfport have provided help in many service projects for the community, often putting on flag ceremonies for special occasions such as the annual Christmas Tree lighting for example, or assisting at one-time gala events such as the Open House Reception with which Gulfport Library celebrated its new building. For years Scouts have delivered Goodwill and Salvation Army bags door to door — and picked up the filled bags a week later. They have provided color guards and flag-raising ceremonies upon request, participated in innumerable parades and in special "Gulfport Days," and have gotten up very early in the morning indeed to set up chairs for ecumenical Easter Sunrise Services on Gulfport Beach.

One of their important but less-visible service projects was painstakingly gathering necessary measurements for the program promoting accessibility to buildings and sidewalks, etc., so that wheelchair and other handicapped people are no longer so restricted in their movements.

They have also gathered toys for the Christmas toy shop, provided color and good spirits for many civic events, helped distribute "Get Out the Vote" literature, and even

provided free baby care while mothers of young children voted. Through distributing "water savers" and participation in other ecology programs, Scouts have extended their awareness of conservation needs and have helped inform and interest others in conservation and anti-pollution efforts.

Service has always been a key part of the Scouting program, and the Scouts stand ever ready to offer whatever assistance is within their capabilities. Perhaps best of all, Scouts constantly reach out to extend the benefits of their program to other young people. For more than ten years (at least from 1959 on), an Annual Scout Carnival has been staged, not only to provide amusement and fun for Scout families and any other youngsters of the community, but also to inform the public regarding Scouting and to welcome new members to join them.

Through Scouting, Gulfport has helped each Scout develop a sense of citizenship both in his/her hometown and in a wider community. By means of a self-directed but demanding ladder of achievements, Scouts earn "merit badges" as recognition of what they have accomplished and as a means of advancing in rank.

Far from being a competition where a child can win only at the expense of some other boy or girl, almost every Scout, even Cubs and Brownies, has achieved some advancement and recognition. The beginning Bob-Cat Cub wins the privilege of turning his membership pin right side up as soon as he does his first Scouting "good deed." Then he earns his way as a Wolf, and a year later he can develop into a Bear, and later a Lion, meanwhile enriching his shirt with "arrow-points" and his belt with symbols of newly-acquired camping skills. Boys making the transition from Cubs into Scouts (from Pack to Troop) earn the forward-pointing Webelos arrow. As Den Chiefs, Scouts learn to lead.

Several Gulfport Boy Scouts (especially under Ed Miller's leadership) completed the entire Scout advancement program, earning the coveted national recognition of an Eagle Scout award. Outstanding Gulfport campers have been elected to the Order of the Arrow, a service program which helps maintain Scout camps. Through special programs within their own church or synagogue, some Gulfport boys have earned a religious award.

Some Gulfport Boy Scouts have been helped to expand their vision by attending National Boy Scout Jamborees (for example, at Valley Forge or in Idaho), joining with Scouts

from all over the United States and, in fact, from all over the world. The concept of the "brotherhood of man" becomes a living reality for them at such times.

Other Gulfport Boy Scouts have made the ten-day High Adventure camping hike at Philmont National Scout Ranch in the Rocky Mountains at Cimarron, New Mexico. In fact, two of Gulfport's Eagle Scouts — Christopher Rautman and Marcus Rautman — have served several summers on the staff of Philmont, teaching Scouts from all over the United States the skills which they began to acquire right here in Scout Hall of Gulfport.

Most Gulfport Scouts have carried their skills into other camping events and on into their own working and family lives. The Scouts of Mr. Girard's 1933 troop, for example, all became "solid citizens," contributing to their community. In Mr. Girard's words: "Most of the boys ultimately had a trade. The Gaskin boy became a molder, "Shorty" (Alfred Welch) became a sea captain at Johns Pass, and George Overhuel went into roofing. J. J. Gilbert became a telephone man, and Joe Webb worked for Florida Power." Mr. Girard's own son, now 57, is a retired parole officer of the federal government.

Not to be outdone by their brothers, some Gulfport Girl Scouts, too, have earned top Girl Scout national awards and/or the privilege of participating in regional and national "opportunities." The range of these special events staggers the imagination — folk dancing at the Suwanee River, jelly making in Wisconsin, studying fish in the Great Lakes or Chesapeake Bay, helping handicapped children at camp, as well as more rugged camping experiences. At least one Gulfport Girl Scout has served several summers on the staff of Girl Scout National Center West (at Ten Sleep, Wyoming), as well as at Suncoast Council's Standing Indian Camp in the North Carolina mountains. In both camps she taught hiking, back-packing, and compass skills which she — like so many other Gulfport girls — began to learn right here on 28th Avenue S. in a hike around the block containing Scout Hall of Gulfport when she was a Brownie only eight years old. Her name is Alison Rautman.

In recent years, both the Cub Scouts and the Brownie Scouts are including still younger age groups. Now there are Daisy Girl Scouts as well as Tiger Cubs.

However much or little they may have advanced formally, all children in Gulfport Scouting have found their lives enriched — perhaps by a great sensitivity to the famous Gulf-



port sunsets as they silhouette the palms and pines against the sky, or by learning to identify seagull tracks in the beach sand, or perhaps by the joy of acquiring a useful new skill in knot-tying which enables them to hang up a clothesline that actually stays up; perhaps by the satisfaction and self-esteem which come from learning how to pack, all by themselves, the essentials for a picnic or a weekend camp, or how to accomplish some essential home routine; or just by enjoying the fun and laughter of a friendly, mutually helpful group of peers and interested grown-ups.

These changes and insights and new ways of growth have remained with these young Gulfport people all their lives, as well as with the adults who, to their own surprise, usually found themselves growing too as they helped the youngsters learn — and it is this training in adaptability which will enable all of us to meet the future.

Both as a progressive city and as a group of citizens, Gulfport may well take pride in this open-ended program which it has been offering to its young people all these past fifty-two years — a living demonstration of the Scouter's promise to "help other people at all times" and to try, as far as is humanly possible, to "Be Prepared."

### *Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts — A Looking-Backward Postscript*

A review of the minutes of Scout Hall Committee meetings (available for many of the past twenty-six years) reveals that the problems — and the children and adults — of those years and of today are remarkably similar! (Even in 1933, boys were the same as now, basically.)

Over and over the same questions have come up as each new crop of human beings faces the same problems earlier ones confronted: lights in Scout Hall are left on after meetings; doors are left unlocked; toilets get clogged by paper towels; windows inexplicably get broken; and someone *still* — after all these years — has to sweep, clean, and repair the Hall. "Some things will never change. Some things will always be the same . . ."

Each new group of Tenderfoot Scouts has to learn all over again how to light a match safely, how to walk without stumbling over uneven ground, and also that it is possible to survive a camping weekend without chewing gum, battery radios or comic books. (Or playing cards!)

And each new group of Leaders learns, painfully, how very hard it is to be a really responsible, fully cooperative, and thoroughly dependable adult, especially one who can "get along" with others.

As the truism puts it: "The more things change, the more they remain the same."

But it is also true that it is only those who profit from the lessons of history who can escape repeating over and over the many mistakes of the past.

That is why historical societies are so important!

And it is also why it is good that we should look back over the Scouting program in Gulfport to evaluate what the effects have been, both on individuals and on life for all in the community.

In view of Gulfport's experience with Scouting over the past half-century, the evidence seems clear: It was a good investment. Gulfport has been a wise community to consider its children and young people as one of its most valuable resources.

Fortunately, we do not have to honor or advance any age group or generation at the expense of another. For all of us, children are OUR stake in the future.

— *Emily W. Rautman*

## CHAPTER 36

### HISTORY OF GULFPORT SOFTBALL TEAM

In the beginning, in 1973, there was a small group of elderly men — including Dr. Colin McLellan, Bob Hawes, Art Gilstedt, a church-oriented bunch — who decided they could get together to play ball for relaxation, fellowship, and better health. In those days we would supplement our ten or twelve players with winter visitors. Summers were hectic with the heat and our ages (all over 60 except Wes), but we kept the group going. We played "Movies Up" which just uses half the field. On some rare occasions I had to choose players for each team 'cause no one else would assume that responsibility. Until Bob Hayes moved to north Florida, he was the manager of the club. His decisions were law — safe or out, both sides, etc. Times were when we had no bases, just stones, no home plate or foul lines except what we drew with the end of a bat. We had no covered dug-out, that's for sure!

Dr. McLellan had a poster printed advertising our club and

we went around neighborhoods tacking copies up in stores and laundromats — wherever we could find a bulletin board. For several years the *St. Petersburg Times* printed weekly schedules of ball teams and included ours, too. Our policy had been to allow anyone who came to the field (relatives, kids, wives, daughters, and all) to play. But due to improved abilities with speed and conditions, we agreed kids had to be 12 or over 'cause we didn't want injuries.

In the middle years, the players submitted names for the club; the most popular one being "Boomerangs." When we heard about Bob Hawes' death, we named one team the "Hawsers" and later added the "Boomers" and "Rangs."

One of Doc's dreams was to secure uniforms and challenge outside teams. Though he didn't live to see it happen, just recently we have been playing others, largely due to the efforts of Jim Vogel, one of our captains.

Until these last few years, Laura Thurman, good friend of the club, secured our equipment on her property; and we are grateful to her.

The City of Gulfport has been, and continues to be, helpful and cooperative in maintenance of the field and providing the bases. We are appreciative of and indebted to the Council and the Recreation Department.

So we Senior Seniors, as we mature through 1981, hope to leave this legacy for you Junior Seniors to carry on at least to the year of our Lord, 2000.

*Jack Welker, President*  
*May 18, 1981*

And now, as the City of Gulfport celebrates its 75th anniversary, the "Boomerangs" are recognizing their 12th year of existence. This winter season we have an active list of 62 players, including our northern visitors. For the last several seasons we had to expand to four teams, and have limited membership to men 50 years or older, with preference given to Gulfport residents.

Periodic collections are taken to provide equipment, first-aid kits, etc. A flea market was held several years ago with receipts going to defray expenses.

Recognition was given by Mayor Clymer when he issued a Proclamation designating the Boomerangs as "The Sunshine Ambassadors of Gulfport" and identifying the week of Dec. 12, 1982, as "Boomerang Week." (Copy in Boomerang file in Historical Museum with Lembree "Update," ten years)



A Hall of Fame was established by electing two players a year to it based on their length of service, ability, and dedication to our club. Twice a year, at Christmas and in the spring, we have a banquet luncheon with entertainment and lots of fine fellowship with our wives and other friends.

For the last two years, an annual game has been scheduled with the world-renowned Kids and Kubs of St. Petersburg and our Senior Softball players. Money collected at these exhibition games is contributed to the Little League players. We plan to make this an annual event in Gulfport.

We lend our support to the City in any way we can and as recently as March 1985, workers were provided to assist in the Seafood Festival. The Gulfport Softball Club members are always appreciative of the City's support, especially the Recreation Department which provides and maintains the facilities we use. We love our City and hope it will continue to be "The Best Little City" — at least in Florida!

*Jack Welker, Chairman, Advisory Committee*  
1985

## CHAPTER 37

### SHAFFERS' KINDERGARTEN AND NURSERY

5659 Shore Blvd.

*July 1, 1950 — December 9, 1983*

Joe and Valentine Shaffer and their four daughters — Joan, Pamela, Megan and Wendy — with their lifetime friend, Helen Mengerink, and Helen's daughter Sally and son Derek, moved to the corner property of Clinton Street and Shore Blvd. in the summer of 1950. Here they made their home and took care of children daily, weekly, monthly, on weekends, and overnight. It was a family-type affair — one great big family.

When the Shaffers began, there were two separate sides of the building. On one, Mrs. Shaffer cared for babies (from hospital discharge to weeks or months old), but no more than two or three babies at a time. The other side contained the "school" to which, at age two, babies graduated into the two- to three-year-old group.

As time went on, the business ("busy-ness") expanded. The little school became a day-care center for two- to five-year-olds, with Joe the teacher of the kindergarten class.

Children who graduated into public and parochial schools missed the Shaffers so much that they often returned during

holidays and the summer months. Working parents made arrangements whereby their children could be transported to Shaffers from Gulfport Elementary School and Holy Name School for care when dismissed, until their parents could take them home after work.

Children and education were "naturals" for the Shaffers. He had taught English and Physical Education at Athens College in Athens, Greece, after graduating from Oberlin College in 1931. Valentine Hadjiry Shaffer (Greek by birth) tutored foreign children in the English language in Istanbul, Turkey, and Athens, Greece. They met and married in Athens, then spent ten years in Lima, Ohio, where Joan and Pamela were born. Seeking a more Mediterranean-like climate, they decided to make their permanent home in Florida, coming first to Tarpon Springs, the Greek settlement in Florida, in 1945, where Megan was born. They moved to St. Petersburg in 1948, where Wendy was born, and to Gulfport in 1950.

Probably no one ever walked or rode a bike past that special corner without stopping to watch the happy children at play or to eavesdrop a bit on conversations between little high-pitched voices and the lower, gentle ones of their watchful guardians. Long-time residents speak most affectionately of these people who enriched their lives and those of their children by caring services they gave many, many young Gulfportians. Joe died January 24, 1984, but that site will be remembered as the scene of healthful, loving care and early education.

— Pam Lanning and Others

### JOE SHAFFER, A EULOGY

Joe Shaffer — this name is almost synonymous with the word "children" — caring for children, nurturing children, teaching children, loving children. Synonymous, because Joe Shaffer's life was devoted to providing the very best child care program possible through his family's endeavor — Shaffers' Kindergarten and Nursery. Because we, on the licensing staff, visit day care centers like the Shaffers' unannounced, we have had an unique opportunity to see this gentleman and his family serenely face many challenges over the years and overcome them while the quality of child care continued on a high level.

We have come to admire Joe's gentleness — his tenderness, his integrity, his cooperation, his ability to nurture and bring out the best in others — a true gentleman.

Joe was totally, unabashedly, happily devoted to his life's work. Even though the children were in care only during the daytime hours, the Shaffers were in the center all the time because it was their home — a real family affair, with wife Valentine, lifetime friend Helen Mengerink, and the Shaffers' four daughters while they were growing up and up, until their own family responsibilities claimed them elsewhere.

While some of us might labor to remodel a kitchen so that it looks like one in *House Beautiful*, with the Shaffers it was a case of putting in a three-compartment sink to meet health requirements; instead of the Oriental rugs which we might choose, with the Shaffers it was a case of finding a flooring surface strong enough for children to play on; instead of carefully matched bookcases, it was shelves to hold children's games and learning aides; in the yard, instead of growing flowers, the Shaffers grew children; instead of planting exotic tropical plants, up sprouted children's equipment — climbing frames, parallel bars, swing sets, etc. Yes, it was all for the children. Even their weekends! When I bought my groceries at Publix on Saturdays, I frequently had long chats with Joe who was filling his cart with groceries from which Valentine would make those delicious lunches for the children.

When our current licensing law was first implemented in 1961, Joe's commitment to good child care was recognized and he was appointed to be one of five members of the Advisory Committee to the License Board. He represented day nursery care for our entire County on this committee, and he is the *only* member to have served continually since then. His service has greatly benefited the work of the License Board.

What has this deep love for the children of our County meant? What does it mean? I will give just one illustration, but this can be multiplied by hundreds of cases in a great variety of ways.

On a plane flight last year, I sat with a business woman, a grandmother returning to her home in Tampa. Our conversation finally turned to our professions and when she learned of my work with the License Board, she just beamed and she had to tell me a special story. It seems that years before, she had lived in Gulfport with her husband and two pre-school-



age sons. Her husband died suddenly and she found herself utterly desperate — terrified — NO job skills! She was shy — she had no option except to get some job training and fast. There was a family nursery in Gulfport. Yes, it was Shaffers'. She took her boys there. How glad she was to find that they would be with a man because they needed a "Daddy" figure. At first, as she went away from home every day, she felt guilty about not being home with them. But the boys liked Shaffers' and they began to blossom. They began to eat better — they slept better — no more nightmares — they played more happily together — they laughed more — they told jokes. She enjoyed them more when she got home each night. Her guilt feelings just washed away. As she relaxed more, she could concentrate better on her training and she found that she was able to cope. She developed a great new sense of self-confidence which she attributed to Joe Shaffers' devotion and love for her boys when they were little. Furthermore, she went on to say that her boys were a success as adults and she attributed much of this to their early experiences at the Shaffers' center. She had just one regret: she had never asked Mrs. Shaffer how to make colored milk which her boys kept asking for after they moved to Tampa. She had — even just on this past trip when she was visiting her sons — heard one of them telling his little boy how much his first school had meant to him and how delicious that colored milk was that was served there. Just multiply that by hundreds of cases, and you can see what Joe Shaffer has meant to our community.

The last meeting of the Pinellas County License Board was just Monday afternoon. Of course, Joe could not be there due to his illness. At that time, the Board authorized that a plaque be prepared in recognition of his outstanding service for the children of Pinellas County. When the plaque is completed, it will be presented to Mrs. Shaffer.

*Ruth E. Jefferson*, Director  
Pinellas County License Board for  
Children's Centers & Family Day Care Homes

January 27, 1984

(Joe Shaffer eulogy, as published in the *Gulfport Gabber*  
— January 26, 1984 — appears on next page.)

January 26, 1984  
794th GABBER

GULFPORT  
GABBER

YOUR FREE  
NEWSPAPER

## JOE SHAFFER — EDUCATOR

Joe G. Shaffer, operator of a kindergarten and nursery in Gulfport until December 1983, died on January 24, 1984. He was 75.

He graduated from Oberlin College in 1931, and taught English and Physical Education at the Athens College in Athens, Greece until 1935. Mr. Shaffer taught high school P.E. in Lima, Ohio, and was also Athletic Secretary for the Lima, Ohio YMCA. He came here in 1945, where he taught at the Country Day School in St. Petersburg until 1950, and was co-owner of Shaffer's Kindergarten and Nursery from 1950 until it closed last December.

He was a member of License Board of Pinellas County and License Board for children under six.

Mr. Shaffer is survived by his wife Valentine; four daughters, Joan V. Hammill, St. Petersburg; Pamela M. Lanning, Gulfport; Megan W. Lechlitner, Venice; Wendy J. Pearson, West Palm Beach and nine grandchildren.

Memorial Services will be held on Friday, January 27, 1984, at the Gulfport Presby-

terian Church, 5313 27th Avenue South, Gulfport, at 7:30 PM.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests contributions to "Trustees of Athens College in Greece," 850 3rd Ave., 18th Floor, NYC, NY 10022 or All Children's Hospital, St. Petersburg.

## MR. SHAFFER — A TRUE GENTLEMAN

These sentiments are for you Mr. Shaffer. I, like countless other people, had the honor of knowing you. I also had the pleasure of working with you.

In the hurry and rush of our everyday lives, you took the time. You explained a new game to a child, pulled out a splinter, tied a shoelace. In the afternoons you took a few minutes to talk to a parent. You told them how well their child was doing at various tasks in their young lives.

You opened a door for a lady, tipped your hat to a friend, and always remembered the little things we all too often forget.

Yes, Mr. Shaffer, you smiled on the world and the world smiled back.

Your friend,  
Leslie Krul

**CHAPTER 38****LITTLE LEAGUE OF GULFPORT***THEIR PLEDGE*

I trust in God.  
I love my country and will respect its laws.  
I will play fair and strive to win.  
But, win or lose, I will always do my best.

The purpose of Little League is the desire to provide a program of baseball and softball for boys and girls under circumstances of fine leadership and in an atmosphere of wholesome community participation.

Little League, since its very beginning in Gulfport, has been the focal point for many family activities in the late spring and early summer. In the winter of 1948, Thomas Bell, Sr., Artie Weiss, and Justine Fowler held a meeting at the old City Hall to form Gulfport's Little League.

One team was formed composed of the following boys: Norman Haines, Bruce Jellison, Roger Stack, Don Buhl, Jimmy McGuire, Russell Carroll, Raymond Wilcox, Bobby Cowan, Roy Kaple, Jerry Hamill, Roger Sharpe, Blake Hartell, Raymond Renny, and boys whose first names are unavailable — recorded only as Roseberry, Walker, Garnett, Reddy, and Jones. This team was chartered into the International Program of Little League Baseball and was one of four teams in the Southwest Pinellas Little League. The other three teams were from Pasadena, Pinellas Park, and Pass-A-Grille. Tom Bell's son-in-law, Norman Haines, was team manager.

The City of Gulfport gave the League use of the southwest corner of Hoyt Field. The Lions Club became their first sponsor. With the help of the City, the Lions, Anderson Lumber who gave most of the materials, Coca-Cola who gave the scoreboards, the boys themselves hammered and sawed to make dugouts, back stops, bleachers, etc. until the field was completed.

Justine Fowler was always there to purchase baseball gloves, shoes or whatever was needed, and was one of the Little League's staunchest supporters.

In the spring of 1949, exhibition games were held at the field. Gulfport was usually severely trounced. Opening Day came, and Gulfport won its first game against Pass-A-Grille. The Lions Club and supporters gave away \$300-worth of prizes and free hot dogs and Cokes to all, children, players, and spectators alike.



In 1951, Nathan White was appointed Manager by the Lions Club and a Madeira Beach team was added to the League. The rosters were limited to fifteen boys, aged 9 and 12, and that meant only four or five new boys could be taken on the team each year to replace those graduating. It was heart-breaking and disappointing to so many boys that it was decided the only solution was to form a four-team League, solely for Gulfport boys. With help from the Lions and City Council, a field was developed at Tangerine Avenue and 55th Street S.; the League has been at that same location ever since.

The program since then has increased to include Tee Ball, Minor League, Major, Senior, and Big League teams in baseball and softball for ages 6 through 18 years.

In addition, in 1963, with help from the Gulfport Lions Little League, many business firms, organizations, and individuals, construction of the complex now known as the Southern Regional Headquarters was started.

The entire complex, located on 58th Street S. and 7th Avenue (Little League Blvd.), was built through donated funds, labor, and materials. This headquarters serves almost 400 chartered units in the 13 southern states (Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and West Virginia). More than 800,000 children and youths are enrolled in these states.

There are six baseball diamonds on the 14 acres, 13 dormitories with housing for 250 people, and an all-purpose court, swimming pool, recreation and dining hall with seating for 350. There are also garages, a laundry, multiple storage areas, concession stands, conference room building, bathroom-shower units, batting cages, pavilion, two resident-type buildings, two grandstand sections, and an administration building.

Among the year-round activities of the Little League of Gulfport, in addition to the administration of the programs in the 13 states, are:

1. Conferences, seminars, workshops, and clinics to train Little League volunteers.
2. Baseball summer camps for six weeks each summer.
3. Major League Baseball Umpire School operated by a professional umpire — Joe Brinkman.
4. College/school baseball team visitation program each spring.
5. Regional tournament for Little League baseball and vari-

ous other tournaments by schedule.

A local Little League currently plays regular season games on the property and some areas are used by other clubs and groups for special events.

*PLAY BALL!!*

— Mary P. Atkinson, Norman Haines

## CHAPTER 39

### OUR BEACH PHOTOGRAPHER

— Morris Rubin —

With permission, we quote the following from the *Gabber* of January 20, 1972:

“The Gulfport Casino, a landmark since 1908, has shared the Gulfport Beach with Morris Rubin for nearly 40 years. Two years before the first Casino was built he was in the photographic business using positive tin-type materials. Photographic paper was unknown then. In 1914 he put aside his camera and became one of New York City’s taxi drivers, driving a Model T Ford with custom-made body employing the newest designs, an enclosed passenger section. Born in Russia, he came to NYC when 16 and prospered until he retired in 1934 and moved to Gulfport. His stand had been the Waldorf in New York — fitting he should become associated with *our* landmark! Building his own camera to use the direct positive papers of today, Rubin set up his “Picture in a Minute” hobby on the Pier where he would fish between customers. When 84, he moved his camera, chair and umbrella onto the beach . . . with his uniform of the day being his swimming trunks. Weather permitting, he arrives at his site at 11 A.M. and leaves about four o’clock.”

The cost of this popular picture? Never changed from the original 1934 price of 25 cents until 1978 when it doubled! The next year Rubin retired. He died February 5, 1982.

On April 28, 1983, Norma Lamb, Library Director, wrote Morris Rubin’s daughter, Roz Roberts, saying the camera and other memorabilia she had sent to the Library would be on display there during the summer. Many admired it! Later it was agreed more could enjoy this treasure if it were placed permanently in the Gulfport Historical Society Museum — where many, indeed, have been drawn to admire it most carefully — especially on Nostalgia Days. Would *you* like to see it? Many of you readers probably could tell us about how

you had your pictures taken by this charming and ingenious gentleman who hid under the black cloth and came out with your picture!

— *Frances Purdy*

## CHAPTER 40

### OUR PARKS

#### WOOD IBIS PARK

Mr. and Mrs. Eugene Steele came to live at 2720 58th Street S. about twenty years ago. They chose that location because the vacant lot across the street was reportedly to be made into a park and they loved trees and open spaces. After a time, when nothing seemed to be happening, Mrs. Steele went to City Hall and got permission to plant trees and flowers there. She and her husband got busy planting, cultivating, and watering with hoses they carried across the street from their taps. They were happier and their neighbors thought it was great. So did "Lady Bird" Johnson, the First Lady, who wrote Mrs. Steele a note of appreciation from the White House on June 30, 1967. A huge dead pine stood in the middle of the lot and wood ibis roosted in it to the extent that their white feathers made it resemble a tree decorated for Christmas; so the Steeles named "their" park *Wood Ibis*.

Beginning especially in 1973, the Civic Club of Gulfport became actively concerned about further beautification of selected areas in the City. They planted trees along Beach Blvd., both north and south of 22nd Avenue, shrubs around the then "Red Cross Building," and they set out a hundred young trees along the beach front. Records of such plantings are recorded in clippings and pictures in the Civic Club Scrapbooks, now available in our Museum. Mary Steele's abiding interest in the Park which she and her husband started, came to the attention of officers of the Club, and eventually the City agreed to have members work in the area and finally to have it dedicated on March 22, 1975, with an appropriate hand-carved marker. Mary told us she always greeted each morning the fifty-foot eucalyptus tree she planted when it was six inches tall with "Good morning, Eugene"! Many residents and their pets enjoy this park of open space, shrubs and trees, and often the ibis return to nest in several of the trees. *The Gabber* published the following article about the



park 10/4/84, with the headline "Remembrance of a Nature Lover":

Mr. and Mrs. Eugene Steele moved to 2720 58th Street South many years ago and almost at once secured permission from City Hall to plant and care for the open space across from their home. It was a unique pleasure for the writer to meet Mary Steele at a Bird and Garden Club meeting about a year after I moved to Gulfport in 1970 and to learn of her concern that the beautiful space should be officially designated as a "Park." The Civic Club was able to obtain acquiescence from the Mayor and Council and on March 22, 1975, Ibis Park was dedicated in appropriate ceremonies. The City assumed overall maintenance of the area, but many loving hands, primarily Mary's, tended the treeelings, plants and flowers until her failing health prevented her from doing more than greeting the large roosting tree for Ibis, each day with "good morning, Eugene." They had dearly loved that focal asset. Now that she has died, may we hope others will assure permanence of this Park, the one appreciable green spot amid blocks of houses, offices and stores. I am speaking for her many neighbors who loved Mary and will miss her — who are blessed from having known her — who are glad she no longer has to "live" while unable to tend her flowers and trees.

— Frances Purdy

## CLYMER PARK

One of the earliest and most persistent concerns of Councilman (later Mayor) Clymer was improvement of the first segment of the subdivision named Veteran's Park — running between 22nd and 23rd Avenues along Beach Blvd. S. During the years when he and his family visited his parents in their home at 2514 Beach Blvd., Mr. Clymer saw the trolley road bed in the center of attractive plantings by the Garden and Bird Club and the handsome trees bordering the streets. Later it deteriorated from lack of owners' care, but it was not until 1975 that the City could obtain possession of the property and then proceed with more than custodial attention. The covered shelter was renovated, decorated with the weather-vane that Mr. Clymer made, and the entire lot was tastefully landscaped with trees, flowers, shrubs, and paved walkways and bridges of the tiny residual creek.

As part of the Bicentennial celebration in 1976, our beautiful Clymer Park was dedicated on July 4. It has been used continuously since then for the City's Christmas Party for the children, for Easter Sunrise Services, and for many private parties including weddings.

After Naomi Clymer's death, the Boomerangs asked the City to prepare a suitable flowering bed and marker in the southwest corner in her memory. She served Gulfport with

her music and other talents as adequately as her husband has with his. We ask blessings on both of them!

## CHASE PARK

Bernette Aiken Beatty, on August 11, 1983, replied to an inquiry about her grandfather, Captain John F. Chase, stating that he had indeed been a co-founder of Veteran City with his friend F. A. Davis of Philadelphia. She said her mother, Maude Chase Aiken, had been given a lot in Gulfport, as had each of the Captain's other daughters and his sons during World War I. It may be assumed that these lots now constitute what we know as Chase Park on which stood the former Methodist Church - Red Cross Building - GEMS Building, and now the Historical Society Museum, plus Scout Hall - the former Pentecostal Church - City Hall; the tennis courts and the shuffleboard courts and clubhouse. Of course, we are talking about the block bounded by 28th and 27th Avenues between 52nd and 53rd Streets S. This area is mentioned many times in other sections of this book. It is a pleasant, quiet spot to sit and think, or just sit! If you're ambitious, you can play tennis, shuffle, or be a Scout.

The Chase family played a large role in the development of St. Petersburg — Maude with her private school which she started shortly after becoming City Attorney Grant Aiken's widow in 1911. That open-air school, located at 5th Avenue NE, offered classes from kindergarten through college preparatory and catered especially for children of winter visitors. Mrs. Beatty said she was shy and her mother thought it best for her to attend public school, so she did — through third grade and again through high school.

The Captain, wounded many times during the Civil War (he fought on the Union side), came in 1893 from Maine, having been a Cannonier left for dead on the battlefield at Chancellorsville, Virginia. He was given the Congressional Medal of Honor for meritorious conduct. Following recovery, he enjoyed lecturing about his war experiences. Also a bit of an inventor, he fashioned a knife and fork combination that he could use with his one hand and he set up a water distillery in the back yard of his home, Camp Chase, next to the corner house at 6th Street and 1st Avenue N. Reports indicate in a fringe-trimmed wagon. How successful he was is unrecorded, but one clipping states the water "was extremely hard and difficult to use for washing clothes or hair."

## HOYT PARK

This area lies between 56th and 57th Streets and 23rd to 25th Avenues S., and is usually referred to as Hoyt *Field*. Elsewhere you will read about this unique feature of our City, so here we say only that we are ever so thankful that earlier residents foresaw the benefits which could accrue by making this space available for ball games. Many played softball then, and do now; the Boomerangs use the field regularly. Boca Ciega High School baseball team uses it, and so does the Senior Division of Little League. Nathan remembers when his father played on the local team, the players were uniformed, and competed regularly with Pinellas Park and other neighboring cities' teams. He said that on Sundays autos would come from miles around, nose up as close as possible to the field, and when disputes over hits weren't settled during the game, they were continued on the streets!

## TOMLINSON PARK

Between 54th and 55th Streets and from 18th to 19th Avenues S. one finds another ball field known as the Gulfport Lions Little League Field. It offers baseball for boys, softball for girls, and two tennis courts for anyone. There, too, one finds a children's play park so shouts of joy or defeat may be heard from people of all ages! Again, we are blessed with this green space and by the care the City gives it.

*Note:* The Zoning Ordinance adopted May 21, 1985, identifies each park as P (Public) Zoning District, meaning Open Space with City-owned improvements in place.

— *Frances Purdy*

## CHAPTER 41

### SENIOR SERVICES

Ruth Jacobs talked with us one day about the beginnings of special concerns for senior adults in Gulfport. She was employed in St. Petersburg in the '70s as a professional nurse by the Board of Education, doing RSVP and assigned to this area. She secured some population data including income levels and agreed with Gordon Gibson, a social service worker at Bayfront Medical Center, that Gulfport would be a prime area for special services for the elderly.

She met Bob Gordon, a do-gooder resident in Gulfport, who was happy to finally have some professional support for what he had been trying to do as an individual. She and Bob



met with Mayor Clymer who suggested that they might conduct a survey to determine actual needs. Bob had become well known for his kindly services to any in need — “squeezing oranges for juice which he carried on his bike to those who had none” and other such acts. His widow remembers she never knew when he would be home for a meal — if at all. He delivered the simple questionnaire on his famous bike rides, later collecting them for tabulation with Ruth.

The questionnaires clearly demonstrated GREAT needs for transportation, for shopping, medical attention, and there were many who needed proper food regularly.

The Reassurance (Clientele Phoning) program had been functioning for some time, and still is. Clients who live alone call into the office at GMSC (formerly to the Adult Center) early each morning to say they are okay. If not, the volunteer finds out why the call did not come and takes appropriate action.

What a reassurance. What a happy chance to start the day off, knowing somebody cares. Then came Meals on Wheels, delivered by van from RSVP. Actually, that was supposed to be sort of a barter system — one would patch up another’s clothing in return for some other chore the second one could do that the other couldn’t.

Ruth said that Yvonne Johnson and Fred Allen, Council members, supported the Mayor in his interest in having Bob and Ruth proceed, and Ruth worked here for two years. Gems got started in 1975 and, by then, Ruth was delighted when Jim Whaley walked into her office one morning asking for work! His background as store manager for Montgomery Ward in New York City had prepared him for this kind of work, but mostly he was qualified because of his intense caring ability, demonstrated in his every act.

It seemed advisable for the City to take over responsibility for Jim’s salary rather than have POC continue supporting the director of these programs. The case history system first established is apparently still in use. The first GEMS service was simply twice weekly trips to Winn Dixie — but now we have three buses, one fully equipped with gear for transporting the able-disabled, even in their wheelchairs. Yearly tickets are available for \$30.00, or \$1.00 per ride. Appointments must be made 24 hours in advance. This service takes many for shopping expeditions, to church, or for just visiting friends not otherwise reachable. It is a superb service, available to all who register for it.

A Committee on Problems of the Aging was formed early on to advise Council on programs desired and needed by senior adults. Members are appointed by the Mayor, with Council approval, and proudly serve as they watch this special care of many residents and visitors. Congregate dining was offered for some time in the Presbyterian Church Social Room and transferred to GMSC as soon as that splendid facility was made available late in 1983. Dental services have been offered by a mobile unit, and legal, IRS, Social Security, CHORE, and other services are available through Jim Whaley's office in GMSC.

Of this whole program we can be justifiably proud!

— *Ruth Jacobs, Jim Whaley,  
and Others*

## CHAPTER 42

### THE DOLL LADY OF GULFPORT

In 1960 I was fortunate to buy a house next door to a very talented, energetic, and friendly couple, Mr. and Mrs. Hunter Von Hof, who were helpful with the many problems I had in trying to adjust to a smaller house, a different climate, and all the trials and tribulations that go with a drastic move by a middle-aged woman alone. Ruhamah Von Hof had a well-established antique shop, next door to me on the corner, where she specialized in dolls.

What a joy it was to be with her and hear her describe and identify each doll, telling where it came from and how she got it. I never tired of her lectures, with slides, or of watching her dress and present her dolls for show. Mr. Von Hof was a great help, for he could repair the little broken bodies, stitch wigs, make tiny shoes, and even make new eyes for the sightless dolls.

When my parents passed away and I had to return to Springfield, Missouri, to help dismantle the old homeplace, I found a large colored picture in the attic. It was called, "The Doll Dance," and depicted a young girl playing the piano for eight or ten dolls of various sizes and shapes. All were dressed in beautiful frilly costumes, and I thought it a very attractive picture for my doll collectors back in Gulfport. So I brought it to them and they were delighted; they hung the picture in their doll museum. Almost at once they decided to make a "Diorama" of the picture and began to look for dolls the size of those in the picture.

Mr. Von Hof built a deep shadow box with gold-leaf frame and found a miniature piano and stool almost like those in the picture. They even found a piece of Oriental rug almost the replica of the one depicted. They found ten small dolls just right to be dressed and arranged.

Ruhamah spent hours making the dresses and suits for the "dancing class," as she called it. Mr. Von Hof made tiny slippers from colored kid gloves, fashioned wigs, and even made tiny fans for the little girl dolls to hold. They told everyone they had never had such a fascinating project and they worked many weeks, at night, on it. I used to see them through the windows as they bent over their worktable, completely absorbed in their work while an antique music box played "The Vienna Waltz." For ten years or so I enjoyed seeing many customers come and go, happier because of contacting those two loving people.

They are gone now, and the lovely "Diorama" hangs in a museum in New Hampshire. But sometimes at night, when the windows are open and I look across the yard, it seems I can see them still and I can almost hear the music from that music box. I really can!

Ruhamah Von Hof had a vast knowledge of dolls and she was always willing to share her information with friends. Her book, *Ruhamah's Dolls*, published by Great Outdoors Publishing Company in 1971, tells of the extensive research she did. The book contains many pictures which have been helpful both to amateur and professional doll collectors alike. She also authored *Ruhamah's Memories*, published by the same publisher in 1973, in which she tells of happy childhood memories and how she became interested in her lifelong hobby. One of my most precious possessions is an autographed copy of her first book.

— Allean Davis

(Note: The Doll Lady's *Ruhamah's Dolls* is in our Museum for you to enjoy.)

## CHAPTER 43

### THE GULFPORT COMMUNITY PLAYERS

In the spring of 1980, a small item appeared in a local newspaper: "Are there people in the area who are interested in starting a theatre group?" Yes, there obviously were, because five years later, the Gulfport Community Players have just completed their fifth successful season. The item



was placed in the paper by Catherine A. Hickman who was promptly elected president and who has continued to serve in that capacity since.

A five-member Board was elected: Betty Weihman, vice president; Ruth Barbey, secretary; Laurel Kipyciensli, treasurer, and Edward Maloney, director. A play-reading committee was formed, a play selected, a director chosen, and rehearsals began. Rehearsals were anywhere that a group of ten or fifteen people could gather — the GEMS building, Scout Hall, a realty office, Fellowship Hall, a sidewalk, a church, etc. The first play produced was a melodrama called *Dora, the Beautiful Dishwasher*. The play was given at the Community Center where the productions are still held.

During the past five years, the Theatre Board has grown from five to seven members; the group has a Charter and By-Laws, it has been incorporated as a non-profit organization; it has produced four plays a year; holds an annual membership meeting; has extended productions from one to two weekends; has joined the newly formed Chamber of Commerce, and thanks to the City of Gulfport, has the old Senior Citizens building as a Rehearsal Hall.

The purposes of the Gulfport Community Players, according to their By-Laws, shall be:

“To organize, promote and sponsor a little theatre group to foster and stimulate the enjoyment of drama and culture through participation in group theatrical and musical activities and productions, and to promote and encourage community involvement in theatre and related theatrical activities.”

One-act plays have been performed for the Lions Club, the Newcomers Club, the Women's Club, the Library, and others. It is a community service club.

— Ruth Barbey

## CHAPTER 44

### THE GULFPORT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The Gulfport Historical Society was organized June 8, 1981, when fourteen people met in the office of Catherine A. Hickman. Those present were asked to give their ideas on the purposes of such an organization. The answers were many and varied:

- "To preserve Gulfport artifacts for our posterity."
- "To leave to future generations the legacy of their roots."
- "To interview long-time residents; to compile a history of Gulfport; to find and preserve historic buildings."
- "To share memories."
- "To instill knowledge and pride in their city by Gulfport residents."

From these ideas the purposes of the Gulfport Historical Society were formulated. The primary objective, this book in your hand, is the culmination of the work of many dedicated people who have spent countless hours gathering and editing the material you find here.

While Gulfport, through its predecessor towns, Disston City and Veteran City, is at least ten years older than St. Petersburg, there has never been a published history of Gulfport.

The second objective was to find a home for the memorabilia (artifacts, pictures, records, etc.) so generously donated by our citizens. Our Museum became a reality in 1983 when the City leased us a building at 5301 28th Avenue S., and the members set about diligently repairing and painting this historic building.

Each year in the spring, in co-sponsorship with the City, we celebrate Nostalgia Day at which time old-timers and newcomers get together at Chase Park to renew acquaintances and to share memories.

We produce a quarterly newsletter to keep members informed of the activities of the Society.

We hold membership meetings four or five times each year and try to have guest speakers who have something important to say to people interested in history.

The first officers of this organization were: President Catherine A. Hickman, Vice President Genevieve Smith, Secretary Ruby Walker, Treasurer Willard B. Simonds; the Board members were: Mary Atkinson, Judy Ryerson, and Nathan White. The only change as of this writing to the officers is that of Treasurer when Willard Simonds was forced to resign due to ill health and Doris Brown was elected in his place.

— *Ruby Walker, Secretary*

## CHAPTER 45

### THE GULFPORT SHUFFLEBOARD CLUB

The Gulfport Shuffleboard Club was organized in 1929 with thirty charter members. Over the years, the membership has varied, but at the present time it is 125.

The first courts were built near the waterfront — I'm not sure where. However, within a short time, our City leased to the club property located on the northeast corner of 54th Street S. at 28th Avenue. The first Clubhouse was built and courts laid out. We have throughout the years continued to lease the land for \$1.00 a year, with club members being responsible for all improvements, upkeep of facilities, etc.

Our new Clubhouse was built in 1975 under the supervision of Charlie Breyer, who donated not only his talent and money but many, many hours of labor. Several members worked with him, and we are all justifiably proud of the building and additional changes that have been made over the years. We now have 22 courts — covered — with a covered seating gallery on the north side. The building houses a fine social hall, well-equipped kitchen, and storage for equipment including racks for 50 cues.

Three major tournaments are held each year — one State and two District. The average attendance at this time is about 500. Many of these players live in Gulfport, but visitors come from every state as well as several provinces in Canada.

The only member of our club to be elected to the National Hall of Fame was Mrs. Josephine Gaustad. That gracious lady devoted time and many talents to our club. She started our Scrapbook as well as the special records we keep of our tournaments. Some of her paintings hang in our social hall. Roger Bowlby and Bernard Todd were elected to the State Hall of Fame. Over the years, trophies have been donated by Home Federal Savings and Loan Association, Easter Funeral Home, and by Mrs. Mary Whippin, a member. These trophies are cherished by all who have won them during our tournaments.

At this time, Ed Swanagan is Tournament Director; he devotes many hours caring for the courts and lawn areas. Cards are enjoyed three nights a week and we have social gatherings each year. Alice Winchester does an excellent job organizing the suppers and providing food during tournament days. We have eight members serving on the Board of Directors and membership meetings are held in December and



March each year.

One of the most satisfying things about this club is the willingness of the members to help out, be it donations or service. The club — made up of people from the north, east, south, and west — represents men and women from all walks of life and all adult ages. Truly, the Gulfport Shuffleboard Club is one more unique feature of our beloved City.

— Aubrey Perfater,  
President

## CHAPTER 46

### THE KONGLOMERATI FOUNDATION

5437 - 29th Avenue S.

Konglomerati Press began publishing experimental and Florida-based writers in pamphlet and chapbook form in 1971, and first issued its literary magazine, *Konglomerati*, in 1972. For the first few years the press was a part-time activity, part of the arts co-op Konglomerati AM in St. Petersburg. As the founders, Barbara Russ and Richard Mathews, grew more knowledgeable about the handcrafts of book production, their interest and involvement in the publishing experiment grew. The press moved to Gulfport in 1975.

In 1976, the first full-scale book of poetry appeared from the press — *Destroy All Monsters*, by F. A. Nettelbeck. The book was set entirely by hand in Kennerly Old Style and Guidy hand-tooled typefaces and printed on a C and P platen press. The book was praised for its craftsmanship and design quality in the *Library Journal* year-end review of the best of small press publications.

Operating entirely with their own donated funds and labor, it was difficult for Russ and Mathews to manage such ambitious publications on a frequent basis. A full year elapsed before *Time and Other Birds*, by Mary Shumway, was published. Shumway's poems of Wisconsin life were accompanied by Oriental-American calligraphy by Margaret Rigg, and the calligraphic blocks were printed on handmade Korean mulberry papers. The book won a major award in the Southeast Fine Print Competition at the University of Kentucky, was written up in *Publishers Weekly*, and helped begin a national reputation for the press.

A breakthrough came in 1977 when a substantial grant

from the National Endowment for the Arts provided partial funding to do four new books of poetry. For the first time the press was financially able to purchase high quality paper, typefaces and other materials, and the resulting four volumes have been widely acclaimed.

The press has continued to produce unique prize-winners and limited edition book publishing has been one of its primary activities, although it has offered other avenues for literary and typographical experimentation. In 1978, the National Endowment for the Arts gave \$5,000 a year for three consecutive years to help develop the magazine, *Konglomerati*. With great care in design and production, and a distinctive sampling of new writing, *Konglomerati* has become a "letterpress showcase for contemporary literature."

In 1979 the press moved into spacious new quarters, and a publishing grant from the National Endowment for the Arts underwrote six new titles, and the Foundation became legally incorporated. The larger space allowed several new directions — a corner was reserved as a showroom for press publications, and our working turn-of-the-century letterpress shop was opened to the public two afternoons a week. Visitors are given tours of the shop and demonstrations of typesetting, printing, and binding. A modest but useful library of technical and non-technical publications concerning fine book-making and the non-commercial literary arts was established, supplemented with a representative selection of literary magazines and fine-printed contemporary books.

Beginning with 1983-84, Konglomerati Foundation became one of the first places in the country to be designated a "Literary Center" with annual funding from the National Endowment for the Arts, Florida Arts Council, and B. Dalton Bookseller. Konglomerati is now Florida's only Literary Center, making Gulfport "the literary center of the state."

The Foundation presents annual lecture series, "Voices of the Printed Page," and offers a range of six-week classes including courses in creative writing, typography, bookbinding, letterpress printing, and other topics related to literature.

The latest direction offered comes through the addition of an Apple computer. We expect to rent keyboard time to writers for their use in preparing letter-perfect manuscripts. Konglomerati continues to seek ways to assist writers and artists in the community and we welcome your suggestions and support.

— Richard Mathews, Executive Director

## CHAPTER 47

YES, ANNIE LAURIE  
DOES LIVE IN GULFPORT!

And, indeed, she did write a history — of her own colorful life!! With pleasure we have read it and believe *you* would be interested in how a twelve-year-old girl grew up to realize her dream of what she wanted to become in her adult life. She wrote her memoirs in 1980 for her family — about her fifty years of service in the Salvation Army and how she came to live in Gulfport in 1940.

Her grandparents were Welsh, born in the same town as Lloyd George. Her mother, Anne George, met an Englishman named Edmond Round at a cottage prayer meeting when she was fifteen, and they loved one another ever after. Annie Round attended George Eliot School, starting when she was three, and she learned much about that great English author who had approved the school and whose name it bore. The Anglican church, across the street from Annie's school, influenced her greatly, too, because of the friendliness of the vicar who often visited the children at the school. They were also guests at the vicarage, which was the Asbrey Estate where George Eliot was born. When Annie and her brother, Eddie, disobeyed parental expectations and attended Salvation Army services for three months instead of the Methodist Sunday School, a mutually satisfactory conference with her mother gave Annie the opportunity to say she wanted to become a Salvationist and "tell people about Jesus." After many years of training by the Army, many locations later, and after 1914, with her husband, Andrew Campbell Laurie, Annie served in Nova Scotia and once rowed across the Bay to accept a donation from Alexander Graham Bell whose estate was near Bedeck. The two established missions in Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick, and became known for their caring skills including their musical talents. Annie sang and Andrew played the horn as her accompanist; Andrew wrote most of the music they performed, for he was composer and arranger as well as instrumentalist. The two were sent into Pennsylvania and to Brooklyn and the Bowery setting up soup kitchens, shelters, and giving concerts for many years. Annie recalls that in January, 1930, their shelter was serving 2,200 men well-balanced meals each evening and prunes, oatmeal, sugar, milk and coffee each morning. Saturday nights it was sauerkraut — for the same number! Her



story tells of visiting clothing and shoe manufacturers to ask for (and receive) necessities for their "guests" and of breaking up prune boxes to make many things — bookcases for instance. Many important people visited them, including Eleanor Roosevelt. A prominent gentleman saw a picture of the President hanging in Andy's office, and upon inquiry from an artist, he learned it had been painted by a "guest." The latter was brought in, promptly adopted by the former who had him moved uptown where he proceeded to his rightful station in life again.

Special holidays were always remembered to the best of their abilities. Sunday night fudge was gratefully devoured by those who had almost forgotten such homey delights.

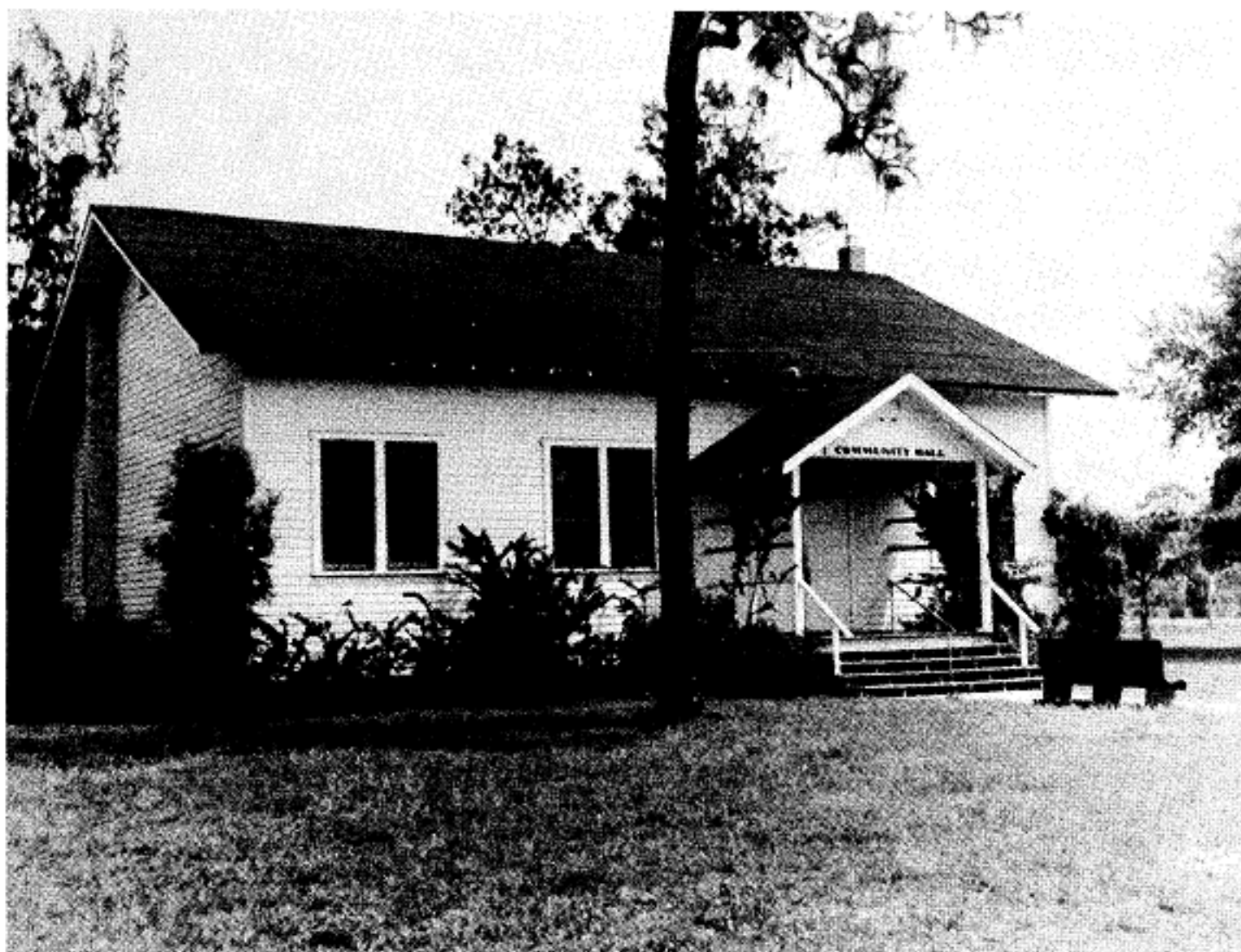
These are only a few of the fantastic feats accomplished by this devoted little woman of superhuman strength — carrying on alone after her Andy's death January 4, 1943.

Andy and Annie Laurie had built a waterfront home here on our Shore Blvd. hoping to spend many years where they had visited briefly — but that was not to be. Annie's sister, Florence Round, bought The Cedars and upgraded it into a hospital and so needed a dietician. Annie had been serving as Matron of a rest home in Belmar, New Jersey, but that had gotten to be a bit much for her so she came to Gulfport to work at The Cedars as a dietician. From that position she retired at age 65, and went to stay in the retired officers' residence in Asbury Park for six years. Then she came to live in the Lutheran Apartments to be near her daughter, Grace, and her son-in-law, "Sonny" Aylesworth.

Naturally, Annie was attracted to the Sunday afternoon musicals at the beach and soon she became their most popular song leader — her fifty years of singing with crowds paid off for she was an instant favorite. She moved into the Seabird Apartments where she lives today with her treasures and memories, still keenly aware of today's doings. She enjoys visits from neighbors and other friends, and now and then feels up to dinner with her family.

We met Annie Laurie on her 93rd birthday on May 10 and felt especially blessed for it. Locally, the Salvation Army has honored her in every possible way. Do you know of anyone else with a life story such as Annie's? If you want to read lots, lots more, borrow the copy of her memoirs she presented to the Gulfport Historical Museum. It makes for interesting reading.

— Frances Purdy

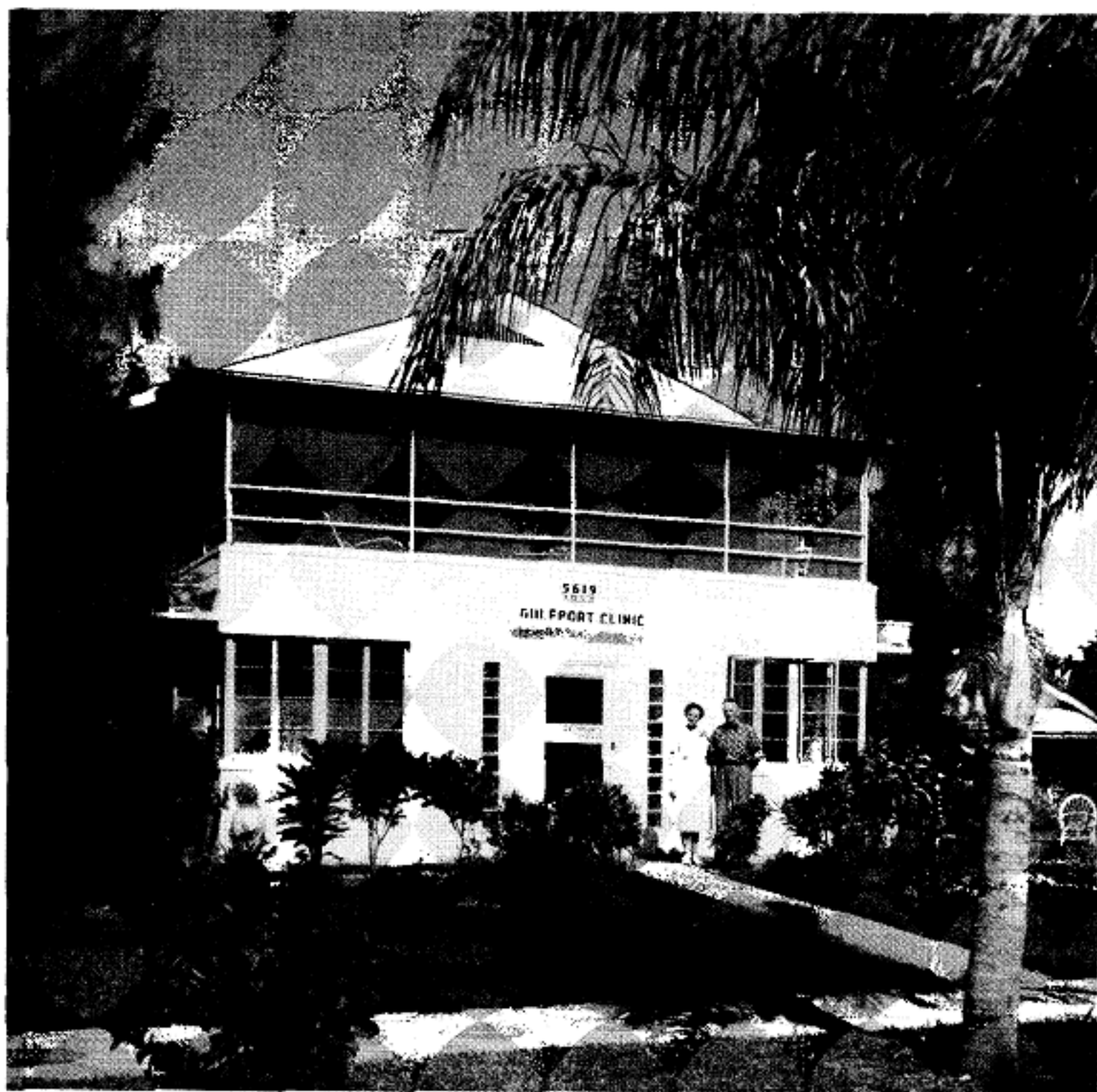


*Community Hall, now Scout Hall, located in Chase Park, was once a church near Disston Street (49th Street). In the late 1930's the town secured the building for trading a lot for it. The church was moved to its present location. Through the years it has been decorated and "fixed up" and was the happy meeting place for many organizations for 35 years. Now the Scouts enjoy the spacious hall and are adding their own improvements.*



*A friendly handshake is exchanged before the rousing Gulfport - Pass-A-Grille game which started Little League play at Hoyt Field recently. Catcher Norman Haines, Jr., does the honors for Gulfport while Pitcher Jimmy Doubek represents the Sailors. The two older "boys" are Norm Haines and Ed Hanskat, managers of the two teams.*





*GULFPORT CLINIC*



*GULFPORT SHUFFLEBOARD CLUB*





**CHRONOLOGICAL CALENDAR***— From Then to Now —**16th Century*

- 1500's** Ponce de Leon explored Florida in 1513 to search for gold and discovered Timucuan Indians (Mound Builders).  
Ponfilo de Narvaez in 1528 set foot on lower end of Pinellas near jungle area.  
Spanish ruled Florida for three centuries.

*18th Century*

- 1700's** Pirates marauded this area in 18th and 19th centuries.

*19th Century*

- 1821** After three centuries of Spanish rule, the United States took over Florida. The government carried on long-running chases on pirates.
- 1823** Dr. Phillipi first white settler in northeast section of the county. Brought first grapefruit to area. Life saved by medically treating pirates. They gave him safe harbor in return.
- 1841** Ft. Harrison was established by Army at sight of Clearwater.
- 1842** Armed Occupation Act (Homestead Act) became effective and gave first material impetus to settlement of peninsula by white men.
- 1843** Antonio Maximo Hernandez, first known settler on the lower end of peninsula, established a fish ranch at Maximo Point after securing a land grant from U.S. government.
- 1848** Hurricane and tidal wave wiped out Maximo's fishery. Egmont lighthouse on Egmont Key at the mouth of Tampa Bay constructed.
- 1853** The first structure for school purposes was built by Captain Jim McMullen near his home on Coachman Road. The first real schoolhouse was undoubtedly the Taylor School built by John S. Taylor.
- 1855** Hillsborough County caused road to be opened from Clearwater Harbor settlement to head of Bay. Tampa cattlemen with cattle in St. Petersburg, had an extension opened which became Old Tampa Road.
- 1856** A pine timber house was built in the lower peninsula on a small fenced tract at about Lakeview and 20th Streets by James R. Hay. He had truck farms for Tampa markets. First road made passed John Taylor place.

- 1857 Abel Miranda settled at Big Bayou.
- 1859 John C. Bethel settled at Little Bayou. Shortly after he started a fishery. Clearwater Post Office established. First to become a community.
- 1860 Mr. Hay sold his home to William Coons for \$25 and a gold watch. Approximately 50 families in terrain known as Pinellas County. The trustees of the Internal Improvement Fund grabbed most of peninsula mainland late in 1860 — just before Civil War which prevented homesteaders from getting land.
- 1861 The Confederate War Department assigned the 4th Florida Infantry to duty along the Gulf coast. The regiment commander was Colonel Edward Hopkins, with volunteers including those from Hillsborough.
- 1862 Abel Miranda's homestead shelled and invaded by Federals during Civil War. His house was looted, storehouse supplies stolen, and house and orange trees burned.
- 1865 Wild animals roamed woods — bear, wild cats, panthers, deer, wild turkeys.
- 1867 End of Civil War brought settlers. Land was 50 cents an acre. James Barnett family landed boat on dunes near foot of York Street, according to Cecil Slauter. They were first settlers. James Barnett located at corner of 49th and 26th Streets S. He died in 1887 from wounds suffered in Civil War. Mrs. Barnett was mother of three children by a former marriage to Samuel Slauter. Old Tampa Bay Road traveled by Pinellas people to Tampa for schools, churches, voting, entertainment, speech-making after Civil War.
- 1868 First black family came into Pinellas.
- 1869 Present system of public instruction began with school law drafted by Superintendent of Public Instruction, C. Thurston Chase.
- 1870 Salt was made by boiling sea water. Seafood plentiful — fish, crabs, clams, oysters, etc.
- 1876 Spaniard Joseph R. Torres bought Captain Barnett's improvements at what was later known as Disston City. Capt. Barnett located about half a mile north. John Bethell was first Postmaster at a Post Office established in settlement of Pinellas Village in lower Pinellas. This was near Disston City or present Gulfport. Approximately 25 people had settled in southeast peninsula. Henry Slaughter, at 18, bought 40



- acres between Lakeview and Tangerine, east of 31st Street which eventually was donated as a cemetery, now Glen Oak.
- 1877 Two stores in lower Pinellas established to purchase flour, salt, coffee, chewing tobacco. Settlers raised vegetables, water melon, pumpkins, and sweet potatoes.
- 1881 Hamilton Disston acquired 4-million acres of Florida land for approximately 25 cents an acre.
- 1883 William Bonafacio Miranda built house on what is now Lakeview Avenue, about a mile from the Barnetts. Mr. Baumeister built at about 51st Street and 31st Avenue S. In an 1883 deed, Disston acquired practically all that is now Gulfport, plus 26,112 acres of what is now St. Petersburg — 110,000 acres in Pinellas County.
- 1884 Town plat of Disston City recorded, platted into 5- and 10-acre plats, 100-foot-wide streets and avenues, and a boulevard along the waterfront. Advertisements in England resulted in English families settling here — Watsons, William Wood, the Rev. Watt and his three sons, R. L. Locke, and Hugh Richardson. The Waldorf Hotel opened Christmas Eve with quite a gala.
- 1885 At the 36th annual Medical Society Convention, Dr. Van Bibber described Pinellas peninsula as one of the healthiest areas in the nation. J. B. Torres platted townsite on a high bluff on Boca Ciega Bay in Section 33, now included in Gulfport. New Post Office established in Disston City, Jan. 5, but couldn't be used until 1889 — so town was named Bonafacio. Zephaniah Phillips settled temporarily in Disston, then moved to Long Key — platted and sold original site of Pass-A-Grille. By the close of the year, there were a number of houses, a large hotel, two or three stores, a dock and a warehouse located here.
- 1886 "Prop College" established in Disston City, with Mr. Norwood as teacher. *The Mistletoe* steamship was put on run between Disston City and Tampa. There were three mercantile establishments — J. R. Torres was Postmaster and sold groceries and general merchandise; H. E. Baumeister sold dry goods and hardware, and R. L. Locke sold groceries. Will McPherson brought in small job press for the first newspaper on the point — *The Sea Breeze*.
- 1887 Construction work on railroad started early in year. Tarpon Springs incorporated. Joe Steinwinder settled near 51st Street south of 29th Avenue. A struggle began to separate Pinellas from Hillsborough. Jacob Disston, brother of Hamilton, headquartered at Disston City in anticipation of com-

pletion of a proposed railroad at that point. The railroad ended in St. Petersburg!

- 1888 First train arrived in St. Petersburg, in June. T. A. Whitted left Disston City for St. Petersburg.
- 1889 Herman Baumeister sold his residence and general merchandise store to Arthur Norwood and moved to New York.
- 1890 Other town of "Disston" Post Office abandoned so Disston City came into being from Bonifacio. Joshua White located at foot of 52nd Street. A severe cold wave destroyed many newly planted fruit groves.
- 1891 G. W. Bennett brought his family to point in Disston and moved into Maximo. Clearwater incorporated.
- 1892 Feb. 29th - neighboring town of St. Petersburg incorporated.
- 1894 Big freeze forced north Florida citrus growers to migrate to southern Pinellas peninsula.
- 1897 Electricity plant brought from Tarpon Springs to St. Petersburg and power turned on August 5. Disston City electrified as byproduct of trolley line. Jacob Disston headquartered at hotel here and advanced \$100,000 for electric light plant. Mrs. Weihman was a teacher at Gulfport School.
- 1898 Infant telephone industry started.
- 1899 Dunedin incorporated.

### *20th Century*

- 1900 St. Petersburg High School came into existence by action of School Board. Roads were mostly trails through the woods. Everett Miller located near 51st Street and 31st Avenue S.
- 1902 Bell Telephone brought lines from Tampa to St. Petersburg.
- 1903 Hillsborough County commissioners promised to hard-surface Lakeview Avenue from 9th Street toward Disston City.
- 1904 Electric streetcar line opened by F. A. Davis.
- 1905 Largo incorporated. The St. Petersburg and Gulf Electric Railway extended to Disston City, sustained by loans from Jacob Disston of Philadelphia. Trolley company operated a boat from our Casino to Pass-A-Grille. Holidays saw rush

business! Captain John F. Chase's dream of Veteran's City came true with dedication in April. Another great occasion!

- 1906 Disston City name changed to Veterans City.
- 1907 According to Mr. Slaughter, a sawmill was built near present 58th Street and 15th Avenue S.
- 1908 Students here rode trolley to St. Petersburg High School.
- 1910 Bad hurricane. Census shows Pinellas peninsula had 13,193 living here. Gulfport incorporated October 12, and Wintersgill elected first Mayor. Gulfport was largest town in Florida, territorially speaking. New school was 4-room block building with eight grades. Good Samaritan Hospital opened in St. Petersburg July 28th.
- 1911 Hillsborough commissioners ignored Pinellas' suggestion of new school buildings. Pinellas split and became an independent county November 14, and became Florida's 48th county with 13,193 inhabitants. Pass-A-Grille incorporated. Town officers voted to purchase 12 lots for town purposes; and to issue bonds for \$4,000. Pinellas was second smallest Florida county with 264 square miles.
- 1912 25 schools in county had 3,263 pupils and first county school board established with Dixie M. Hollins as Superintendent of Schools. First United Methodist Church opened its doors October 24. Council voted \$10,000 bond issue for improvements — \$1,500 for townhouse and jail; \$4,000 for road improvements; \$1,500 for ditching and culverts; \$500 for bridges; \$500 for sidewalks, and \$500 for street crossings.
- 1913 Pinellas Park incorporated. Gulfport officials voted against building a jail. Mayor Wintersgill made fiery speech against rum traffic and Council imposed prohibition. City Hall was built.
- 1914 Gas for cooking brought into lower peninsula. By December, Boca Ciega Inn was built - originally called Hotel Dobler.
- 1917 World War I "Victory Gardens" made at school by students. Mr. McKinney was on road committee of ten Pinellas Co. townsmen to plan county system of roads. Roads were completed to connect towns.
- 1920 Superintendent of Schools Dixie Hollins' report included pictures of Pinellas elementary schools and an annual get-together with academic and literacy games and calisthenics making up the "great day" of the school year. Fish dinner was available for one dollar. There were five Walter Brooks'

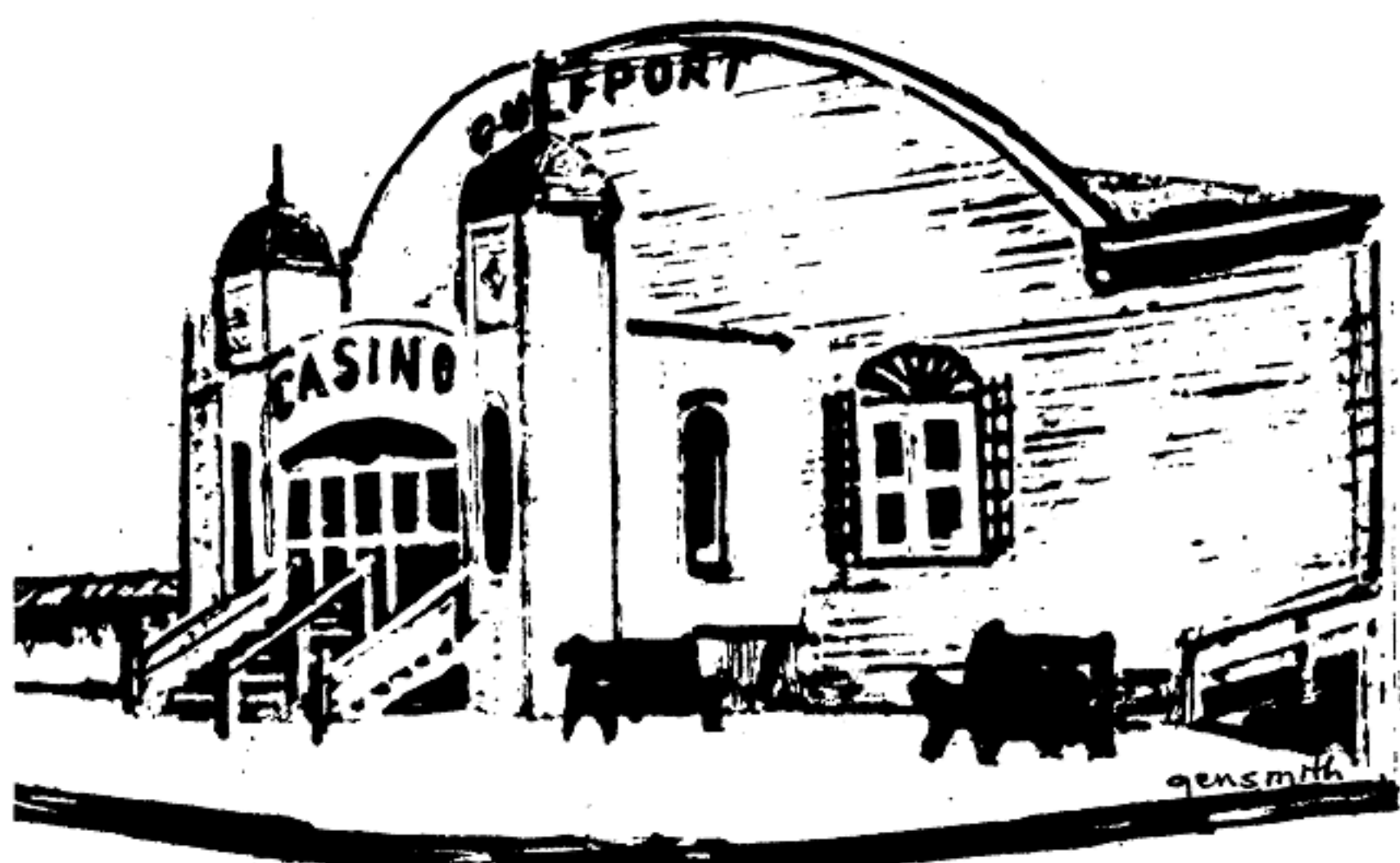


families here — could tell by postmark which one mail was intended for. Royal Palm Cemetery started.

- 1921      Devastating hurricane on October 25 — worst in history!
- 1922      Mr. Walter Fuller was involved in property sales with an option of \$195,000 which included unimproved land that comprised Coreytown, Pasadena Golf Course, and all land west of Gulfport.
- 1925      Gulfport bought its first fire truck for \$12,000. A group of men, including Jack Taylor, took option on all land west of 58th Street. The Rolyat Hotel built — one of most beautiful Spanish structures (now Stetson Law School) in southeast. First roads paved, water system and incinerator installed. Old Post Office moved behind new one built this year.
- 1926      New Spanish style elementary school with center atrium built. Junior High started and opened June 27 — name later changed to Disston Junior High.
- 1927      Contracts for teachers for 1927-28 were limited to 7½ months for elementary and 8 months for secondary teachers.
- 1928      Planning Board recommended to Council that certain streets, boulevards, and avenues be named to conform to St. Petersburg's. Lots were auctioned off in tent on west side of Beach Blvd. between 30 and 31st Avenue at \$50-\$100 each. Until now Post Office had been in Brooks' house with two daily deliveries. Family watched for trolley and got the mail.
- 1929      Shuffleboard Club established in this year.
- 1930      U.S. Bureau stated 851 people living in Gulfport. Teachers received half pay because of economic conditions. Water brought in.
- 1934      New Casino opened. Open-air movies presented by merchants every Tuesday evening.
- 1937      September 14 - oil stoves purchased for school cafeteria for new lunch program.
- 1939      400th anniversary of the arrival of Hernando DeSoto's landing on west coast. He wrote the first letter with a Florida dateline and sent it to the Governor of Santiago on July 9, 1539.

- 1940 U.S. Census reported 1,581 people in Gulfport. Young firemen drafted so teenagers get chance to be trained.
- 1941 Tower of Stetson Law School (current name) used for plane spotting.
- 1949 May 7 - trolley car made last run.
- 1950 U.S. Census reported 3,702 people living in Gulfport.
- 1953 Boca Ciega High School built on 58th Street at a cost of \$1,520,209.
- 1954 Gulfport citizens asked to approve a new charter that included the Council-Manager form of government. Population reached 8,000.
- 1956 36 civic clubs registered in City.
- 1960 U.S. Census reported 9,730 people living in Gulfport.
- 1961 Elementary school PTA held fairs and spaghetti dinners to raise money for fans for the school rooms.
- 1962 Driver education begun in schools. Big freeze took most all Australian pine trees in area.
- 1964 During winter snow fell! At Gulfport Elementary the Principal, Miss Theresa Graves, sent 6th graders to all rooms to be sure all children had chance to see snow in Florida.
- 1971 End of Ellis Camp legend of the Boca Ciega Inn on the shore!
- 1977 Gulfport Civic Club donated 12 safety seats for children's swings at elementary school.
- 1980 Gulfport elementary school had 553 students.
- 1982 Gulfport Historical Society organized June 8, with 13 charter members. First Nostalgia Day celebrated at Chase Park with 150 in attendance.
- 1983 Disston Junior High School torn down during July-August.

— *Genevieve Smith*



GULFPORT CASINO



## POSTLUDE

From this enterprise those of us primarily involved in it have learned a lot about our City and about many of its residents. We are deeply grateful for the quality of cooperation we have experienced when we asked people to help us — by remembering, by contributing money, memorabilia, and time. We know how quickly descriptions of places can be changed by bulldozers and other restructuring, with changes in ownership, and by death. What we offer here can be enlarged upon by further reading and listening in our Museum. Our ambition was to collect for you information true at this time, insofar as we know, about our City and its residents and to renew YOUR faith in the integrity of behavior which we believe has built this good place in which to live.

Cicero said, "Memory is the treasury and guardian of all things." Others call it the passport to pleasant pasts. Many have said it is the best garden where one can forget the weeds and remember the blooms. James Barrie said, "God gives us memory so we may have roses in December."

We hope we have lived up to the Society's objectives!





*L-R: Doris Brown, Catherine Hickman, Bert Williams, Judy Ryerson, Richard Smith, "Gen" Smith, and Helen Ross — 1983.*



*Frances Purdy, Editor*



*L-R: Dick Smith, Genevieve Smith, Mary Atkinson, and Colleen Camp.*



*George Belting, Betty Belting, Johanna Schneidt, and Ruth Barbey.*



*L-R: George Prigun, "Gen" Smith, Judy Ryerson, Margaret Weihman, Sydney Brooks, and Melanie Collier.*

## TAPED INTERVIEWS ABOUT GULFPORT HISTORY IN MUSEUM

Aiello, Dorothy White, by HR  
 Anderson, Harold (5) by HR  
 Arms, Phebe, by FP  
 Aylesworth, Sonny, by AC  
 Berls, Olive, by HR  
 Boette, Conrad, with Gleaton, Wessie, by HR  
 Boyd, William B., by HR  
 Bozeman, Richard E. (4), by HR  
 Brann, George, by FP  
 Brooks, Sydney and Walter (3) by HR  
 Brown, Dexter E., by HR  
 Brozowski, Walter (3), by HR  
 Caldwell, "Bob", by FP  
 Coffee, Clara N. and Hal C. (3) by HR  
 Conron, Agnes - Council Minutes, a reading.  
 Davis, Catherine H. with Palmer, Stanley (3), by HR  
 Dunn, Hampton, *Yesterday's St. Petersburg*, readings by HR  
 Evans, Marion, by FP  
 Frehut, Ernest G., by HR  
 Freyberger, Alfred, by HR  
 Futch, Nat (3), by HR  
 Girard, J. D. (3) with Walter A. Lange, by HR  
 Gleaton, Wessie Gibson; and with Jesse & Hilda Gleaton (3), by HR  
 Golliner, Herman W., by AC & HR  
 Good, Howard E., by HR  
 Grismer, Karl I., *History of St. Petersburg*, readings by HR  
 Haines, Norman W. & Edythe S. by MA & HR  
 Hodgson, Norma, by HR  
 Hurley, Frank T., *Surf, Sand and Post Card Sunsets*, readings by HR  
 Jacobson, Victoria T., by FP  
 Johnson, Marjorie Dalton (3), by HR  
 Lange, Walter A. (3), by HR  
 Lange, Walter A. with J. D. Girard & Marjorie Dalton Johnson, by HR  
 Mann, Sallie E. & Evelyn Sibole by HR  
 Mann, Sallie E. & Evelyn Sibole & Virginia Welch, by FP  
 Morris, Edna Webb, by AC & HR

Murray, Adelaide & Dorothy White, by HR  
 Murphy, Althea, by FP  
 Nesbitt, Bishop Ednin, United Holiness Church & Glen Oak Cemetery, by HR & MA  
 Nostalgia Days - 1982, 1983, & 1984 (8) - many speakers!  
 Osgood, Neil C & Ernest G. Frehill, by HR  
 Palmer, Stanley (3) and with Catherine Davis, by HR  
 Pappalardo, Ernest, by HR  
 Perry, Joseph M., by HR  
 Pestano, Joseph T. (3), by HR  
 Peterson, Sara Ann, by HR  
 Pilcher, H. G. "Buck", by AC & HR  
 Roberts, Joe (3), by HR  
 St. Bartholomew's Cemetery records, read by HR & CAN  
 Sibole, Evelyn & Sallie Mann, by HR  
 Simonds, Willard B. & Leon and Eddie, talk at Society meeting about Fla. Military Acad.  
 Slaughter, Willis I. & Cecil Slauter, by CAN & HR  
 Slauter, Cecil & Flo Fussell and Bette Smith & John Chestrom (4), by HR  
 Slauter, Cecil & Alice M. Holland (2), by HR  
 Starkey, Jay B., by HR  
 Taylor, Marilyn and Friends, by FP  
 Tamm, Stella & Agnes Conron (2), by HR  
 Thomes, Rose & Charles, by HR  
 Tripoli, Charles, by HR  
 Walker, Judge Seth (2), by HR  
 Watson, Lorraine Gleaton, by CH  
 White, Harriet Benn (3), by HR  
 White, Nathan L. (3), by HR  
 White, Nathan L. (2), by MA & HR  
 White, Nathan L. & Edythe S. Haines, by MA & HR  
 White, Nathan L. & Friends at Nostalgia Days and Society meetings.  
 Williams, Bert & Walter, by FP  
 Williams, Dr. Ray (Liz Richards' Show) Archeological Society data, reading by HR

### LEGEND:

MA - Mary P. Atkinson; AC - Agnes Conron; CH - Catherine Hickman;  
 CAN - Carl A. Norberg; FP - Frances Purdy; HR - Helen Ross.

*Most of the above has been typed and are with other materials used  
for documentation in Our Story of Gulfport, Florida.*